

**MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
DURING THE YEAR END FUNCTION IN WESTVILLE PRISON ON
TUESDAY 29TH NOVEMBER 2011.**

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) for inviting us to be part of this event to celebrate and appreciate the achievements of the year as well as plan for the year ahead.

We appreciate the partnership that we see today between the taxi industry and the government through the Department of Correctional Services, which has seen inmates being empowered through Sesikhulile Project.

This alone is an indication of the positive results of public-private partnerships which our government believes is one of the sustainable methods to fast-track service delivery in our country.

In this case, we work together in finding solutions to the safety challenges we have which are threatening the wellbeing of our people.

We know that the current Government has given crime high priority along with other critical developmental imperatives such as health, education, rural development and the creation of decent work.

In line with this, there has been very strong emphasis on the relevance of a united, comprehensive approach in the fight against crime which combines aspects of crime prevention, crime combating, improving socio-economic conditions and strengthening of human solidarity among citizens.

Much work has been done in attempting to create an understanding of the various factors that give rise to the crime levels we see in our areas today. In light of what we know about the crime challenges faced by KZN, as the provincial Government we are spearheading a drive to 'Build A United Front Against Crime'.

Through this programme, we call for the mobilisation and involvement of all sectors of society in a concerted and sustained campaign called 'Operation Hlasela', to significantly reduce crime levels in the Province.

We say that, as Government, community leaders from different structures and as members of the community, we have to take a stand and work together side by side in finding solutions to the safety challenges which are threatening the wellbeing of our people.

On that score, I would like to give a special appreciation the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU), some members of which come from this prison, for partnering with us to launch and roll out a new campaign called Operation Val'ingozi where we will focus on the revival of our people's conscience.

This Operation Val'ingozi seeks to revive our morals and consciences as individuals who contribute to societal safety and well-being or lack of it. It calls for people to speak to their conscience as they use the roads or go about their daily business. Our message is clear: 'Speak to your conscience, don't break the law, don't kill people'.

We also appreciate the fact that, like many of our other stakeholders, SANTACO has come on board and supported this campaign.

All this is a united front that has a number of elements, such as, to mention but a few, looking at the family as a basic unit in society, promoting responsible citizenship, civic mindedness, building of community cohesion, crime reporting and information sharing, etc.

Therefore, we want to emphasize to all inmates that your imprisonment, irrespective of the sentence, is not the end of the road. You still have a chance to develop your mind and improve your attitudes so that when you come out of prison you are able to mix with people and live normal lives.

We as government therefore invite all the inmates to join us in the fight against crime and be ambassadors for safety.

When you are released from prison, you must achieve a level rehabilitation that ensures you don't come back here as offenders again. But it will be good to see you coming back here as free man, as professionals or business man, or trades man, we do want to see you come back here to motivate other inmates and give them hope – as role models, not as fellow inmates again.

There is an unacceptable stigma that our province has of being a leading province when it comes to crime, road fatalities as well as HIV and AIDS. We call upon all of you here to work with us in changing this perception.

It may be true that our province has many people compared to others, but let it not be true that we are indeed criminals, reckless drivers and loose in our conduct when it comes to our private sexual lives.

There is no replacement for safe sex – using a condom has to become fashionable amongst young people and this inyama enyameni business has to stop whether we are in prison or in society.

Our government has over the years been supporting disadvantaged population groups and communities to grow and to prosper and to share the wealth of KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa. We also know that some of you have acquired skills and knowledge that will allow you to take charge of your own future careers.

As government and society, we therefore are aware that one day you will be part of the national economy as productive citizens of our democratic and non-racial South Africa which our fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers fought for in the not so distant past.

It is on that score that we call upon all those skilled inmates, that when they are released and they go back to society, to take advantage of our programmes aimed at broad based black economic empowerment (BEE) and support for the small and emerging business sectors.

Our gathering here today coincides with the period of 16 days of activism on no violence against women and children. This campaign reflects our unity in opposing, rejecting and reporting the rapes, murders and assaults of our women and children. Our rejection of these social evils is based on the acceptance of the supreme values of Ubuntu.

Scores of women and children are still physically, sexually and emotionally abused daily. With regards to children, both girls and boys are subjected to violence, and experience different patterns of abuse and vulnerability.

Girls are sometimes at a higher risk of sexual abuse. Our children and women are victims of various forms of family violence. Brutal forms of school or family 'discipline', like corporal punishment and hard labor, is also a part of violence and it must stop.

Our government is working tirelessly to expose, oppose and combat all violence directed against women and children, in whatever form and wherever we encounter it, be it in our homes, schools, or workplaces. We say violence against women and children, including psychological and emotional abuse, must come to an end. All forms of violence must be considered unacceptable.

Lastly, let me thank the taxi industry and the Sesikhulile as well as the prison management for making this day possible. We know that without the taxi industry, we would have a worse challenge of unemployment as your industry has absorbed a number of youngsters of this age group that is with us here.

The taxi industry is one of the largest employers in the land and we salute you for that role. Inmates need to be aware that the post-apartheid South Africa provides us with opportunities in different aspects of transportation, including the freight industry (ama-trucks), shipment (imikhumbi), and aviation (ezamabhanoyi).

So the sky is the limit for an inmate who has made up his mind that whether your being in prison is justified or not, there will be a better tomorrow for you and it begins now and it begins with you. Let us all join hands in creating a better future in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

I thank you