

**SPEECH NOTES FOR THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,  
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND STUDENTS SAFETY DIALOGUE INITIATIVE ON 23  
AUGUST 2012**

Programme Director;  
Members of the University Council;  
Leadership of the SRC;  
Representatives of student organisations;  
All students present;  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to all of you who have come to this important gathering. As all of us probably would understand, this event should have taken place at least during the youth month of June this year following the unrest that had occurred at this University at the beginning of the year.

It was at that time that the senior management of the institution under the leadership of the Rector Prof. Mazibuko decided to involve us as the Department of Community Safety and Liaison in a dialogue with the students regarding challenges pertaining to safety and tolerance on the university campus.

But we had to postpone because of the students' examination and the Winter Holidays since we wanted to reach a maximum number of students.

I am therefore pleased by your presence here which to me is a reflection that there is a strong willingness to make this institution safer and successful. It is our wish that our being here today will be worthwhile in your future - both while you are in and when you are out of the University.

It is however very unfortunate indeed that this day and age we still have to come here to discuss the intolerance and unrests among students which happen especially when one organisation loses elections.

There are a lot of good causes for which we should be meeting. But having to attend a gathering of this sort is in some ways an admission that something has gone wrong in our student politics.

As from today we are beginning a journey. We are on a mission of waging open war against all the factors that may directly and indirectly have led to instability in this University. As Government working with you as a collective, we cannot allow a situation where our young and future generation is deprived of their right to education because of some power hungry people.

As a democratic country, South Africa has ensured that academic institutions have student bodies that have a potential to engage and develop politically. But I must also warn you that as you develop politically, you must refer to history. You must learn from our history – take the good and refrain from re-living the ugly aspects of our history. We know that some of our youths died and others had to rot in jail because of our history.

As student bodies, you must commit yourselves to operate in the context of a frame of values that include integrity, mutual respect, coexistence and care for others; a sense of fair play and a desire for excellence. We expect all staff members and students of the University to conduct themselves in accordance with those core values. You must commit yourselves to promote those values within and outside the institution.

For instance, if we do not handle our work with integrity, we will be assisting the University to earn itself a bad image. If we do not encourage and promote respect and cordial relations, we will invite unnecessary disrespect and wrath from others - again the image of your organisations and ultimately the institution will be tarnished.

Let us assist in ensuring that every member of the student organisation is free to express his or her thoughts, opinions and convictions, while respecting ethical principles and the law. Let us support this University in its operations and core mandate which is associated with respect for human and civil rights and most importantly, to academic freedom.

As Government, student leaders from different organisations and as members of the council of this institution, we have to take a stand, work together side by side in finding solutions to the challenges we now have which are threatening the well-being of our students.

Today is a day for us to share our ideas, engage each other and emerge with a workable solution for the benefit of all. Remember, the purpose of this exercise is to promote dialogue. It is about agreeing to disagree and finding common ground. It is not about pointing fingers and blaming one another.

As the Provincial Government we are on a course of *Building a United Front Against Crime*, and even though you are expected to be the beacon lights of society, we are now having to come here and promote peace and stability like we do in all communities where these vital characteristics of a healthy society are being threatened by events that have taken place recently.

This meeting has been called to harness our collective wisdom and agree on the roles that each of us will play in making the students of this University enjoy safe and progressive freedom of thought and action.

As I indicated earlier, Provincial Government under Premier Dr Zweli Mkhize has a programme called '*Operation Hlasela*.' Operation Hlasela is about embarking on a concerted drive to streamline and integrate programmes which will lead to targeted and sustained interventions in areas where there are serious safety challenges.

Through the vigorous work of the Department of Community Safety & Liaison which I am privileged to lead, we as Provincial Government, working side by side with all of you, have decided to prioritise the following recommendations:

- To have political tolerance workshops for all political formation, including the current SRC,

- To ensure that management treats all students equally, including their political formations;
- To ensure that management involves other political formations in assisting during the registration period so that the registration process is not overwhelmed and poorly managed;
- To ensure that management deals with the student assistants who use the registration periods to pursue their corruption activities,
- Once the SRC has been elected, there needs to be a memorandum of understanding between itself and other political formations. Such will ensure co-operative and democratic conduct that promulgates co-existence, plurality of thought and a peaceful environment.

It is further recommended that on-going workshops must be facilitated for political leadership. If it is possible with the university management, the election can be monitored and presented to the management and all the student political formations so that the democratic system of electing the student body will be trusted and respected. Finally, there must be a working arrangement between the SRC and other political formations because it will facilitate democratic behaviour and co-existence.

Today let us make a resolve to re-commit ourselves to be part of a world-class and accommodating leadership of this institution and uphold higher standards that are associated with the higher education community at large. I am looking forward to the cooperation of all the academic staff as well as our students. Let us all share ideas on how we can contribute to taking our higher education system to greater heights and overcome some of the challenges that continue to draw us back all the time.

We look forward to hearing from each organisation what role you can play in bringing about lasting peace to this University.

I thank you.