

MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE PROVINCIAL SAPS GOOD PERFORMANCE AWARDS CEREMONY ON FRIDAY 26 OCTOBER 2012 IN DURBAN.

Programme Director;
Honourable Premier Dr Zweli Mkhize;
Chairperson and Members of the Portfolio Committee;
Provincial Commissioner;
Senior Management of SAPS;
Business Against Crime;
Chairperson of the CPF Board;
All police authorities and officers present;
Distinguished guests;
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for being part of this event today as we celebrate the achievements of the country's pride and security servants who are members of the South African Police Service in our province.

We are very encouraged by the fact that this ceremony has become an annual calendar event for our SAPS. It gives us the unique opportunity every year to focus our attention on giving the necessary recognition and praise to the brave men and women in blue.

We acknowledge you for your daunting task because you always put your lives on the line to ensure that peace and stability prevail. For you it is a way of life to risk your personal wellbeing and that of your families, for the rest of us.

You are men and women who are in the forefront of the fight for the safety of our communities, for the protection of our homes, properties, businesses and for the security of our families, more especially our children, women and old people all of whom happen to be vulnerable members of society.

Once again this event reminds us what would happen if you did not exist, if you were unwilling to answer the calls for help, if you did not stand between criminals and their victims. Surely you are unsung heroes and heroines who deserve our recognition, respect and praise for the work you do.

We acknowledge the fact that the SAPS in our province have always had their hands full dealing with extraordinary challenges – be it community criminal activity, family violence or political confrontation. We know that KwaZulu-Natal is one province where the police have the extra burden of having to deal with perpetrators of political violence as well as taxi feuds, over and above the usual crime that other provinces have to deal with.

However, we note that there have been many arrests made by our officers regarding killings related to political and public transport killings. We wish to reiterate today our message from the police to those involved in criminal activity out there – that they have a war on their hands and that we are united in the quest to defeat them in our province.

Despite the challenges of losing our officers on the battlefield, again today, we are convened here to celebrate and give honour to the work, dedication and selflessness demonstrated by our police officers from different police stations in the execution of their duties.

We know that the province and indeed the whole country continue to face the very serious challenge of mourning the deaths of men and women in blue. Once more we are outraged by the incident that happened two weeks ago in New Germany.

There two constables were responding to a complaint of a robbery in progress when they were shot by suspects. One officer was killed instantly and the other one is still fighting for his life in hospital. The injured officer was able to call for back up and upon arrival of other members, an exchange of gun fire ensued, consequently one suspect was also killed.

Other two suspects were later arrested. One of them confessed and was sentenced to life imprisonment for murdering a police officer and 15 years for robbery. A court hearing is in progress in relation to yet another suspect.

I would like to convey my deepest appreciation and give credit to all those members who instead of retreating after seeing their colleague lying dead, they decided to soldier on. We know that loved ones and friends of our police do not want their dear ones to die in this fashion, but it is an unfortunate prize that some of our police men and women have had to pay whilst trying to execute their noble duties and we salute them.

As the province, we continue to implement the resolutions of the provincial summit on police killings that we hosted in August last year. As government, we understand that this is not only a matter of urgency, but that of “life and death”. We reiterate our view that a society in which the confidence of the police is undermined is far from being healthy and safe.

Hence, our campaigns of rebuilding relations between the Police and our Communities have had a positive impact.

According to the recently released crime statistics, the progress that we are making in dealing with crime is manifest in the on-going reduction in the rate of criminal activities, especially the most serious crimes. From these stats, we also know that the 2011/2012 festive season was the safest in recent years.

We are working hard towards ensuring that the trend which has seen a decline in the rate of crimes such as murder, car hijacking and robbery in the past financial year should continue.

This should be a clear indication that Government is working tirelessly to make South Africa, and particularly our province of KwaZulu-Natal, a better place for all.

The provincial Department of Community Safety and Liaison has been able to give meaning to the constitutional political responsibility that entitles provinces to monitor the conduct of members of the South African Police Service, to oversee the effectiveness and efficiency of the police service, including receiving reports on the police service and to assess the effectiveness of visible policing, amongst other things.

The evaluation processes undertaken by communities, together with our departmental officials, assist us in assessing the performance of our police stations.

The desired goal here is to maximise effective police visibility and enhance interaction and participation amongst local stakeholders. We aim to see how communities are mobilised and engaged in the fight against crime. To that effect, the provincial legislature has blessed the re-launching of a renewed Board that is responsible for community policing initiatives.

Our police stations must be in touch with local issues, structures and the communities. They must be seen to be working together in order to be able to seize control of the streets from criminals.

On the other hand, ladies and gentlemen, we are already seeing results of our broader anti-crime strategy, called Building a United Front Against Crime, which seeks to rally communities behind the crime fighting cause. This programme uses Operation Hlasela as a vehicle to roll out the strategy throughout the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Operation Hlasela is impacting positively on the Criminal Justice System in that through mass community mobilisation, greater confidence is being built between the police and the community, resulting in communities being more willing to give critical crime-related information to the police, much of which has led to the arrest of criminals.

In conclusion, once more I wish to take this opportunity to thank those men and women in blue, past and present, the living and the dead alike, who have contributed to correcting the perception about this profession and those who are determined to turn the delivery of services around.

As Government, we want to encourage SAPS members to make use of the existing platforms to take care of their psychological needs as they sometime get traumatised while enduring the hazards of their job. Male or female, we are human beings who can break and be emotionally unstable. Hence, we all

need psychological intervention which can now be accessed and help reverse negative feelings and thoughts that may be triggered due to the violent nature of the environment we often find ourselves in.

And finally, on behalf of our Government, I would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to all of you who have continuously remained true partners in the fight against crime and criminals.

To all our stakeholders, your presence here is not only encouraging but is a clear sign that working together we can succeed in the fight against crime. We will continue to strengthen our partnership with all of you in our multi-pronged strategy to defeat criminality.

I thank you.