

**ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, AMBASSADOR
CHUPU MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE
PROVINCIAL EDUCATION SUMMIT, HELD AT MEROPA
CASINO AND ENTERTAINMENT WORLD**

09 May 2016

Programme Director;

MEC for Education, Ishmael Kgetjepe;

Executive Mayor of Polokwane Municipality, Cllr Thembi

Nkadimeng;

Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality, Cllr Gilbert

Kganyago;

District and Circuit Mangers;

Principals of our schools;

Leadership of our trade unions in the education sector;

Representatives of students' and learners' organisations;

Representatives from Umalusi

Ladies and Gentlemen:

First of all, let me take this opportunity to commend MEC Kgetjepe and his team for organising this important summit.

The past few days have been the darkest for education in our province. We have witnessed ugly and deplorable episodes coming out of Vuwani in the Vhembe region.

We have seen parents literally burning down the future of their own children;

We have seen children themselves being mobilised to destroy their own future.

The burning of schools and related infrastructure in Vuwani has pained me a lot.

Our government is equally saddened by these thoughtless actions.

What saddens us most is the fact that this seem to be a growing trend in our communities where communities target our schools and disrupt the education of our children just to register a point with authorities.

This cannot be acceptable.

You would remember that not so long ago it was the community of Malamulele in the same area of Vhembe; they too targeted and destroyed school infrastructure just to make a point with the Municipal Demarcation Board.

I struggle to find words to describe adults who lead actions that sacrifice the future of their own children.

I have said it before that it does not matter how legitimate people's concerns are, we condemn in strongest possible terms disruption of schools and the education of our children in the name of protests.

After visiting Vuwani yesterday and engaging several stakeholders, Traditional leaders and pastors forum, am glad to announce that all of us are agreed that we need solutions on how our children will catch up on their lost schooling days urgently.

We are also agreed that a political solution should be adopted and implemented like yesterday. The future of our children cannot be postponed.

As you may have heard about 23 of those arrested are appearing in court today, and we are following closely on these cases.

Programme Director;

The MEC in his generous introduction of the Keynote Speaker has alluded to the purpose of this summit.

Indeed we are here to find answers and solutions to some pertinent questions and challenges within our education system.

This summit has been organised amongst others to respond to the need to:

- Improve learner performance; ensure stakeholder involvement in the education of our children;
- ensure effective learner involvement and support; and

lastly,

- to ensure the improvement of learning outcomes through the utilisation of Information and Communication Technology.

We have gathered in this fashion because of our shared understanding that the success of our economy and any other aspect of our life starts in the classroom.

The importance of education has been so adequately summarised by President Nelson Mandela when he said that:

“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, and that a child of a farm worker can become the President of a great nation”

The essence of what President Mandela said is that without education we will not succeed in our efforts to move Limpopo and South Africa forward.

It is for this reason, therefore, that as government we have invested heavily, both in terms of expanding access to education and also in the improvement of the quality of education in our schools.

There is no doubt, whatsoever in our minds, that we have made significant inroads in reversing the legacy of apartheid education system.

In this regard we have introduced a number of legislative and policy interventions that meaningfully opened the doors of learning and culture.

As a measure of promoting effective learning, the government has introduced the concept of Scholar Transport. I am hopeful that this summit will also speak to some of the challenges we experience with regard to this system.

We are also continuing to provide all no-fee paying schools with nutritional meals in terms of the School Nutrition Programme.

Our experience is that learner attendance continues to improve as a result of this programme.

The government is also at work to ensure the eradication of inappropriate sanitation facilities and unsafe school infrastructure.

This will also include repairs to storm damaged schools and provision of new schools, new classrooms, laboratories, libraries and more importantly, water.

I have got no doubt that this will go a long way in ensuring that our children learn in a more conducive environment.

You will also agree with us that we have finally and completely closed the chapter of delays in the delivery of textbooks.

Once more, we are making a clarion call to school principals, educators, learners, parents, and other relevant stakeholders to help us with the retrieval of text books at the end of every academic year.

Let us continue to make the education of our children a societal issue.

We cannot over-emphasise the significance of the involvement of parents in the education of their children. Parents must make sure that they support the SGBs and also hold them accountable. They must also make sure that their children are at school on time and also supervise them with their school work.

Parents should also assist the schools with the general discipline of their children. In this way, we will be able to make our schools real community centres of excellence.

Programme Director;

It is now open secret that our target of 80% pass rate suffered a knock as we dropped from over 70% in 2014 to just over 62% in 2015.

We have not given up on this target; we are still pursuing an 80% pass rate. We will achieve this target with the support of everyone who is here with us today.

All of you have a role to play in helping the province to reach this 80% Matric pass rate.

Our teacher unions, our SGBs, and our learner organization must contribute something towards this target.

I have seen delegates from the University of Limpopo, I know that the university prides itself with 'finding solutions for Africa'; we are therefore confident that they too are here to help us 'find solutions for Limpopo education.

Our institutions of higher learning, including the University of Venda as well as TVET colleges must also come on board, assist us to find everlasting solutions to our educational challenges.

Programme Director;

As I have during the state of the province address, the Cabinet decided to withdraw Section 100 Administration from the province by the end of March this year.

The only department where the Cabinet considered conditional

withdrawal is Education. This was mainly on account of the outstanding challenges in respect of supply chain, overall financial management and related outstanding deliverables as contained in the memorandum of understanding between us and the National Cabinet.

It is against this background that we invoked Section 18 of the PFMA to help turn around the situation in this department.

Accordingly, the officials Provincial Treasury were deployed to the department of education, and we have begun seeing significant improvements.

Lastly Program Director,

I invite everyone present here to participate freely in this summit with a view to enrich our resolutions.

We must all start acknowledging that the education of our children is a collective responsibility. It is not about the Premier or the MEC, it is not about the SGB, teacher trade unions, it is about us all.

These children, whose future lies in our hands, are our children. History will judge us harshly if we let them down. Their future

and the future of our country lie in education and it starts with them now.

I once again wish to thank you very much for your attendance.

I wish you robust and fruitful deliberations.

I Thank You!