

SPEECH OF THE FREE STATE MEC FOR SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, MR DAN KGOHULE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE FINE ARTS EXHIBITION LAUNCH, BLOEMFONTEIN.

14 June 2011

Programme director
Colleagues
Honoured guests
Ladies and gentlemen
Comrades

I am grateful for the invitation to be part of the Fine Arts Exhibition launch this afternoon. I am very impressed by the high standard and quality of work that is on display in this exhibition. This indicates the remarkable talent that our young people possess and signals the need for us as stakeholders to nurture and promote these talented young artists.

This event takes place at a time when our country will celebrate the 35th anniversary of the events that took place during the 16 June 1976 students uprising. The commemoration of Youth Day this year takes place at a time when all sectors of our society celebrate the 17th year of our democratic dispensation.

The commemoration of 16 June presents an opportunity to young people in this country to take stock of achievements gained in the sector since the advent of democracy. It also affords all role-players the opportunity to identify and outline all challenges that still face our young people in the new dispensation. This is also a time when government and its agencies are urged to continue and improve upon programmes that are aimed at youth development particularly the National Youth Service.

The Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation (DSACR) in the Free State remains firmly committed to the overall vision of promoting and ensuring an active, creative and informed Free State community by providing effective service delivery to the people of the province. In aligning the range of services that the department provides, some critical factors have to be outlined and achieved in order to truly fulfil the mandate of the department.

I believe that the development of the arts coupled with the preservation and promotion of the diverse cultures in the province remains critical in our pursuit of unity and nation building.

We are indeed aware of the immediate challenges confronting the performing art sector as well as the general arts and culture fraternity. Attention should certainly be given to this as a matter of urgency. The department managed to solicit additional allocation in this medium term expenditure framework (MTEF) period. This allocation will enable us to kick-start intense programmes to address some of these challenges.

Our success in addressing challenges facing the arts sector is also dependent on certain prerequisites and enablers which include: strengthening the relationship between the Performing Arts Council of the Free State (PACOFs); Community Arts Centres such as Mmabana as well as reviving theatres in the different municipalities. Partnerships between all these key stakeholders I believe would ensure mass participation and benefits for artists in various localities. The challenge is for these stakeholders to sit and produce a workable plan for immediate implementation.

As a result the department would be establishing a provincial structure that will coordinate all arts and culture genres. This structure should be registered so as to enable it to independently source funding and develop viable programmes. The past year saw the kick-starting of such an initiative by establishing five district choral music forums. We cannot underestimate an organised and formal mechanism of coordination amongst the different art disciplines. One such initiative that must be applauded was Motheo musicians that formed themselves into an association. We will like to see such a move rolled out in all the districts.

We should work harder in order to collectively place the cultural and creative industries at the forefront of our national priorities. It is imperative that the arts, culture and heritage sector should take its rightful place; at the core of the national effort to build a socially inclusive society and to contribute to economic growth and job creation. We contend that; a society with a strong sense of identity and social cohesion is necessary to create the conditions for economic growth and prosperity.

These young artists have done us proud and their recognition will serve as encouragement for other aspiring artists in the province to emulate their skills and success. I sincerely hope that you will draw strength and continued inspiration from the recognition you have been given today. Your work is in deed inspiring, may you continue to hone and develop your talent so that we can pride ourselves with your artistic gift in the future.

I thank you.