

**SPEECH OF THE FREE STATE MEC FOR SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, MR
DAM KGOHULE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SAFA XHARIEP SOCCER DEVELOPMENT
LAUNCH, TROMPSBURG**

28 May 2011

Programme director
Honoured guests
Colleagues
Ladies and gentlemen
Comrades

It gives me great pleasure to address this important gathering during which we launch the South African Football Association (SAFA) Xhariep Football Development Programme. I am delighted by the bold steps taken by SAFA in the Xhariep district to solicit and acquire funds to ensure the development of soccer in this part of our province.

The provincial government has identified Xhariep as one of the most critical areas that need serious attention with regards to socio-economic development. We are well aware of the plight of the people in this area.

During the State of the Province Address, Premier Magashule alluded to various interventions that provincial government will be undertaking in an effort to bring about development and change in the lives of the people in this district. I wish to assure you that following the reaffirmation of the vote of confidence displayed by our people in this area during the recent local government elections, we will live up to our promises and fulfil the aspirations of the Free State communities.

This gathering confirms our firm belief as a department that communities can be in a position to assist government in ensuring that we acquire the necessary resources, monetary or otherwise, to develop sports and recreation in our communities.

We are aware that the identification, development and nurturing of young sports athletes was a privilege that was afforded to a select few during the previous dispensation. Our present government realises the importance of sports as a key factor in ensuring nation building and social cohesion.

Many of our sports legends are products of years of training and guidance and most of them were identified as talented individuals from an early age. It should be our concern that many young people in our communities are not able to develop their talents, be it in sports, the arts, education or any other field because there are not yet sufficient programmes in place to identify and nurture them.

This launch today is a progressive initiative to ensure that talented young soccer enthusiasts are given an opportunity to develop their talents and therefore excel in the beautiful game. For far too long sport in our communities has been underestimated as a means of developing and defining the psyche of our nation. It is important to realise that sport is an integral part of the life of a nation.

As government we are prepared to engage in programmes that ensure and create conditions in which our youth can excel in sport. This means providing sports fields, training equipment and facilities and sports equipment.

We have huge social problems in our communities, including drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, HIV and AIDS and lack of discipline among the youth. Sports is an indispensable means of improving the

social fabric of our society, and can make a very real contribution to ensuring our children and the youth lead meaningful lives.

As South Africans we should understand the primacy and potency of sport and recreation. We are also cognisant of the fact that there is no vantage point in unpacking our current state of sports in schools. We believe this is our strength not a weakness as we must allow many ideas to blossom like many flowers, but always mindful of the fact that in the end that the progressive, the new and the innovative must win at the end of the day.

Our society needs a shared value system and common perspective on all the challenges that are laid bare in front of all us. Only the unity of purpose will see us through all these challenges. By the same token there can be no denying of the challenges we inherited from our past dispensation.

The benefits of sport are for all to see. Former President Nelson Mandela once commented that "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite the people in a way that little else does. Sport can awaken hope where there was previously only despair."

Team work builds confidence and comradeship on the sport field and in the classroom. Competition improves the mind and body and brings out the best in people. Learning rules is a virtue in itself, because you will discover that we need rules to live by and that we cannot live as isolated units without rules. It is difficult to play sport without keeping to the rules. And exertion is a good in itself – a healthy mind in a healthy body.

We need to provide hope to many young and old South Africans and rekindle their hope, love, passion and commitment to sport and recreation. We need solutions and we will continue to work with SAFA on the projects we have identified and agreed to collaborate on.

I wish to commend the SAFA Xhariep district for this all important achievement. Your efforts will indeed go a long way in benefiting young people in this district. The objectives outlined in your Football Development Programme should serve as an inspiration to other sports structures in the province to emulate.

I wish to thank the national Lottery fund for their support towards this initiative. I hope that through mutual cooperation we will be able to work together to further improve the lives of our people for the better.

I thank you.