

**SPEECH OF THE FREE STATE MEC FOR SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, MR DAN KGOTHULE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE DR IRVIN KHOZA SUPER LEAGUE, BOTSHABELO**

13 May 2011

Programme director  
Honoured guests  
Ladies and gentlemen

We are privileged as the province of the Free State to welcome you and host this occasion during which we officially launch the Dr Irvin Khoza Super league as an attribute to pay tribute to an individual who has distinguished himself as a passionate and committed person who has dedicated his life towards the development of soccer in South Africa.

Earlier this year during the State of the Province Address, Premier Magashule announced that the Free State Province will be hosting the Dr Irvin Khoza Games in honour of the Chairperson of the Professional Soccer League. We are all aware of the meaningful contributions that Dr Khoza has made towards the development of soccer and sports in general.

When our country was selected to host the 2010 world cup in 2006 we were aware of the enormity of the challenges that we faced as the hosts of the first ever Soccer World Cup on African soil. Questions were posed as to whether we could be in a position to stage an event of that magnitude.

The commitment and dedication of people such as Dr Khoza, Mr Danny Jordaan and others proved all those that had a doubt to be wrong because we host one of the best ever FIFA World Cup tournaments ever.

We are all aware that our country and our people, united in our diversity, have a common passion for sports. It is within this context that we believe that as a nation we can progress to better unify our society and build upon social cohesion through sports and other recreational activities.

In deed the unity and patriotism we witnessed during our 1995 Rugby World Cup victory and the hosting of the 2010 Soccer World Cup is indicative of what we can achieve if we all, as a collective, strive towards a unified and tolerant society.

In his illustrious career as an administrator in football, Dr Khoza and his colleagues have contributed towards bringing an international level of professionalism to soccer in our country. We are proud that our Professional Soccer League and other divisions are considered to be on par with other world class soccer leagues in the world. Needless to say, the management of soccer and other sporting codes in South Africa are of a high standard and we cannot compromise this by ignoring the development of sports at the lowest level.

As provincial government we view sports development as an integral part of nation building. This launch of the Dr Irvin Khoza Super League is indicative of our efforts to ensure that young people actively take part and are supported in developing their talent and nurturing their skills.

This tournament which we launch under the School Sport Mass Participation Programme will provide an opportunity for us to identify talented soccer players at school level and therefore develop and promote competitive school sport programmes in the province.

We should realise that sport can be a catalyst for economic development. It is important that we collectively identify the problem areas in our schools that impact negatively on the development of sport, and that we put in place strategies to resuscitate sport in schools.

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

We have a duty to revive sport in our schools, and ensure mass participation from our learners. Competitiveness from a young age is healthy, as long as it is nurtured in a positive spirit. Incorporating sports and reviving mass participation in our schools, will give renewed opportunities to our learners to remain in school and complete their education.

We must use school sport as a nursery for talent identification and development, which will lead to our learners moving onto higher honours and make us all proud. But in all our work, we are guided by the President's call for partnerships. If indeed we are going to grow and develop our province as a learning home for all our children, we all need to join hands.

The benefits of sport are for all to see. 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 have a responsibility to provide learners with the opportunities to participate in school sport, to provide the facilities and equipment, and to provide educators with the necessary skills to facilitate the successful implementation of school sport.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is imperative that we emphasise the role played by sport in the intellectual development of a learner and, the subsequent advantages it has in his or her academic performance. We therefore need to ensure that sport becomes an integral part of a learner's activities in school if we are to ensure improvement in academic performance in our schools.

I wish to applaud Dr Khoza for his unwavering dedication to the development of soccer at all levels. He has earned his place in the hearts of the nation through his commitment to the soccer fraternity. I am confident that his skills and abilities as an administrator will be emulated by those that manage the different sporting codes in our country.

I thank you.