



Member of Executive Council
for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation
FREE STATE PROVINCE

THE SPEECH OF THE FREE STATE MEC FOR SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, MR DAN KGOHULE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CULTURAL EVENING PROGRAMME FOR FREE STATE BURSARY HOLDERS, 10 March 2012, Cape Town.

**Programme Director
Honoured Guests
Free State Bursary Holders
Ladies and Gentlemen
Comrades**

I am indeed pleased to be amongst such a distinguished audience of young people who carry the aspirations of the people of the Free State Province. You truly represent our hope for the future, a future that will realise the ideal of a developmental province and society that provides and caters for the needs of its people.

We have organised this Cultural Evening Programme, firstly to show you that you are still in our hearts and minds and that we care about you. Secondly this gathering is aimed at enhancing your morale and encouraging you in respective fields of study. Lastly we are here to remind you of the rich culture, traditions and heritage of the province from which you come.

The post 1994 era has signalled the importance of defining and contextualizing the importance of youth development in South Africa today. It also prompted us to outline the vision and role of the youth in this dispensation against the vision and contribution made by previous young generations towards the realisation of our democracy.

It is critical therefore to identify opportunities that young people can be presented with whilst also taking note of the challenges besetting the youth today.

Previous generations of young people faced the daunting task of fighting oppression and inequality. Today, however the legion of our youth are faced with challenges that include Illiteracy, unemployment, the scourge of HIV and AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse and crime. We have to address these impediments in order to liberate and empower our youth today. We have to ensure that we put in place viable programmes and processes that will assist us in overcoming these challenges effectively and efficiently.

During the state of the Province Address in February, Premier Magashule asserted that “Youth unemployment is not only a statistical matter, but it is at the core of the quality of life, as it negatively affects the welfare, livelihood, development and progress of youth. There is obviously an imperative for us to act decisively to intervene and arrest the challenges of youth unemployment.”

One of the interventions undertaken by the FSPG in this regard was the establishment of the provincial bursary programme of which you are part. Through this programme we continue to generate requisite skills that are necessary to support the New Growth Path and the development priorities of the Free State Province.

This year alone 1500 bursaries have been awarded to deserving learners. These bursary recipients, like you, are studying at different institution across the county in various fields that are critical to the socio-economic development of the province and the country. We sincerely hope that as bursary recipients you will plough back the knowledge and skills you have gained here back to communities in the Free State.

It is important to mention also that last year, we hosted the inaugural Provincial Youth Camp. We have conceptualized the Provincial Youth Camp and the Cultural Evenings programme as vehicles that will foster an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenship.

The aim of the Provincial Youth Camp and the Cultural Evenings Programme is to ensure that we enhance our efforts to achieve:

- 1) Nation Building and National Identity
- 2) Citizen participation, and
- 3) Social Cohesion

This Cultural Evening Programme should serve as a platform for you as young people to engage in serious dialogue and debate over pertinent issues that affect the youth and society in general. It is important that we afford young academics an enabling environment to assess and determine their role in shaping the overall reconstruction and development of the country's agenda and the direction we should take in implementing such an agenda.

The programme will give young people an opportunity to deliberate on concrete and specific issues that will assist us as a province to move forward. These include amongst others; enhancing our programmes and strategies for a common identity, shared values, common culture and socio-economic development.

It is imperative also that we inculcate amongst our youth the concept of unity in diversity. We have to continue to promote and preserve our cultures and heritage. Our young people have to carry forward the concepts of ubuntu and patriotism as envisaged by leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Bishop Tutu.

Young people from the Free State should cherish and celebrate the rich cultural and historical attributes of our province. It is important for the youth to realize that their contribution is critical if we are to make meaningful advancements as a nation.

My Department will continue to champion social transformation in the province. And with the participation and support from all our people we will create an enabling environment for social cohesion and nation building. We will also continue in our endeavors to promote Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation thereby enhancing and retaining the vast heritage, cultures and talents prevalent within the province.

We have specifically targeted tertiary institution students because you are at the prime of your youth. You are better able to grasp and comprehend the various issues that face young people. Our tertiary institutions are a domain where ideas are developed, this is where future leaders of our country are groomed and they remain a strategic societal point of entry for young people to influence the future of our country.

As young people you are the custodians of our rich history and heritage. You can and should play an active role in ensuring that these entities are cherished, preserved and celebrated by all.

You are a new generation of young lions. Your province and country need you to carry forward the ideal of unity, patriotism, tolerance, social cohesion and transformation

I thank you.