



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, 19 May 2012, Tshwane.

**Programme Director
Honoured Guests
Representatives of Tertiary Institutions
Free State Bursary Holders
Ladies and Gentlemen
Comrades**

We meet here tonight in this Cultural Evening for Free State Bursary Holders as part of our programme to continuously reconnect these bursary holders with their roots in the Free State.

This is the third Cultural Evening programme that we are staging for those students who have received bursaries from the Free State Provincial Government. The first such programme was staged in the Free State at the picturesque Golden Gates located near Qwa Qwa late last year. We held the second Cultural Evening in Cape Town early this year. This is the third one that we are staging here in Tshwane ya Mmamelodi.

Programme director, there is a reason and a value behind the staging of these Cultural Evenings for those students who receive bursaries from the Free State Provincial Government. At the outset I can indicate that as the Free State we are trying to do things differently in our quest to bring about change in our society, in our effort to realize the goals of this government. Let it be known that we are the only Province in the country that gives bursaries to deserving students at this magnitude. This year

1500 bursaries have been awarded to deserving students who are studying at various tertiary institutions across the country. Above all we are not just giving these students bursaries and leave them to their own fate. There is a continuous support and monitoring in terms of how well or not so well they are doing in their different institutions of learning.

As the Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation in the Free State, we have also taken upon ourselves to ensure that, additional to the academic and administrative support we are giving to bursary holders, we also bring a cultural programme to them wherever they are across the country. As I have indicated the first such Cultural Programme outside the Free State was in Cape Town and the second one is now here in Tshwane. These will be followed by others in other provinces.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I indicated to those students in Cape Town early this year, we organise these Cultural Evening programmes, firstly to show you that you are still in our hearts and minds and that we care about you. Secondly, we this programme we intend to enhance your morale and encourage you in your respective fields of study. Lastly, our aim with this programme is to remind you of the rich culture, traditions and heritage of the province from which you come.

I am sure we will all agree that our focus on you as students is not just a mere obsession but an absolute necessity. Education is a high priority for this government. It should also be a high priority for you as well. All of us should put our hands on deck to ensure that we realize the realization of the goal of quality education for all in our society.

It is our firm belief that through investing in students we can be able to bring about a total transformation of our society. During the presentation of our Departmental budget we stated the following, and I quote, "It is our considered view that in conjunction with the national agenda of

breeding a united, non-sexist, non-racial and prosperous society, a focus should be given to those who are already in an ideological world, to whom the country and the province in particular will vest with powers of leadership in realizing the country's national agenda", close quote. Now, you are those people that we are referring to in that statement. It is our firm belief that 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 certainly want you to complete your studies, develop knowledge and skills that are necessary to come and assist us to bring about a better life for all our citizens.

It is important that you realize this fact that you are valued, that society has a higher expectation of your role in the transformation of this country. When you are aware of this fact you will do everything in your power to ensure that you do well academically and position yourselves in society as agents for change, as job creators more than job seekers and so on.

Whether you are a student in the social science or physical science field it is important that you realize that our society is faced with various social challenges that need to be addressed and that your role in addressing these challenges is important.

I have said it those students who gathered for this Cultural Evening in Cape Town that "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”.

As government we can only do so much. The rest of what should be done depends on the broader society, the private sector, academic institutions and so on. As government we are indeed doing as much as we can to mitigate against all the social challenges that we are confronting. The awarding of bursaries to students such as yourselves is one example of our effort to address these challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are all aware that one of the other major challenges of our society is job creation or unemployment. As a matter of fact unemployment, particularly as it affects young people in general, is a ticking bomb upon which our society is sitting. During the state of the Province Address in February, the Premier of the Free State, Mr Ace 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.”

Our efforts at addressing job creation as government have been underscored by the Cabinet Lekgotla of 2011 which stressed the need to create employment on a large scale, more especially for the youth. As the Department, for example, we undertook to 16 unemployed graduates in an internship programme. To date, 23 graduates have been involved in an internship programme. An intake of extra 7 graduates will be made in the next financial year. My department will also involve more students in learnerships and Internship programmes in line with the National Skills Development Strategy and the Cabinet decision of 2002, which says the number of young people involved in internship and learnership

programmes should reach 5% of the staff establishment of each government department

Given the kinds of economic challenges that face even 'first world' countries at the moment, where austerity measures are being introduced to curb on government spending, these efforts by our government must be applauded. Our intake of young people in various government departments through learnerships and internships, and other measures of job creation such as the Extended Public Works Programme, is an effort to ensure that we are not sitting with the same problems such as those that we are seeing in European countries such as Greece, Spain and so on where young people have taken to the streets due to unemployment in those countries. We know that the so-called Arab Spring revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and so on have their basis in the disenchantment of young people in those countries.

Programme director, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, as I conclude let me then point out that it is our aim to make our students to have a broader outlook at life beyond their academic studies. While we seek to assist you in every possible way, such as provision of bursaries for your studies and providing learnerships and internships as part of job creation, you have a responsibility to empower yourselves by being cognisant of developments around yourselves.

Part of what you should be conscious of as students are the national goals of this government in the building of this society. At the core of these goals are three elements which are:

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

As I stated before “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 asses 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”.

I thank you.