

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR HEALTH MEC, HONOURABLE
SASEKANI MANZINI, FOR THE DEBATE POST THE STATE
OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS**

**03RD MARCH 2020 AT MPUMALANGA LEGISLATURE,
MBOMBELA**

Madam Speaker and Deputy Speaker;

Honourable Chief Whip of the Majority party;

Honourable Premier, Mme Refilwe Mtshweni -Tsipane;

Honourable Members of the Legislature;

Colleagues in the Executive Council;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Comrades and friends;

Honourable Chair, I want to join my colleagues in government and the people of Mpumalanga Province in welcoming the Watershed State of the Province Address (SOPA) by our Honourable Premier, Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane. Honourable Premier, we want thank you for the leadership and guidance, and prioritizing the developmental needs of the people of Mpumalanga Province.

Honourable Chair, the Honourable Premier painted an inspiring picture of the tale of two cities by painting a scenario of the best of times and the worst of times.

Of course, the Honourable Premier isolated just a few issues that described the best times experienced by the Province of the Raising Sun. There are a number of good stories that we can tell as Mpumalanga

Provincial Administration, under the astute stewardship of our Honourable Premier. We ascribe the positive performance of the Province to the visionary and unwavering leadership of our Premier.

Honourable Chair we have entered a new era of hope to further improve the basic living conditions and lives of all our people. We draw inspiration and courage from the Freedom Charter as quoted by the Honourable Premier when she said: **“Freedom Charter which demands that there shall be free medical care and hospitalization shall be provided to all, with special care for mothers and children”**.

Honourable Chair, we stand here today, in this august house encouraged by the moving, insightful and inspiring foresight expressed by the honourable Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane last Tuesday.

It was a comprehensive narrative of the shared vision for the future of the province of the Rising Sun under the capable stewardship of the revolutionary people’s movement, the ANC of Mme Albertina Sisulu, Lilian Ngoyi, Victoria Mxenge and my other heroines of the struggle against the oppressive system of apartheid.

Madam Speaker, we address this house when the world at large is plagued by the devastating outbreak of the Corona Virus (Covid-19), declared by the World Health Organisation as a global health emergency.

The President of the Country issued a directive for the repatriation of all or willing South Africans residing in the Wuhan Province of the People Republic of China. This single bold step by the President bears testimony of the caring nature of the ANC government.

Honourable Chair, the Inter-ministerial Committee assigned with the matter gave South Africans the breakdown of the comprehensive repatriation process, which includes the pre- and in-flight screening, quarantine and re-unification measures. Thus far, as the country and the Province, we are fortunate not to have a single reported suspected Corona Virus case.

The Department has put measures in place to respond to any unforeseen cases and have identified Rob Ferreira as the centre to deal with such.

ON NHI

Madam Speaker as outlined by the honourable Premier, the Department of Health is currently implementing the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development as adopted by United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, of ensuring that “Health for All” is a reality for everyone, everywhere in the province, and reaffirming that health is human right by implementing the Universal Health Coverage through National Health Insurance.

Honourable Chair, the National Assembly conducted the public hearings on the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill and they started with the Mpumalanga Province. During these hearings, our people came out in great numbers to inform us that they want the NHI now.

We know that the imperialist and colonial forces within and outside the country are working very hard to discredit the NHI policy direction and our capacity to implement NHI.

We are not naive to a point that we would stand to deny the existing challenges in the health care system. However, government works very hard to push back and eradicate these challenges. What surprises us is that these prophets of doom and doubting Thomas’s, forget that we

inherited a health system designed to serve the interest of the minority. These people ignore the advances made by the ANC government since the dawn of democracy to increase accessibility and equity but instead choose to dwell on the negative.

Universal Health Coverage is actually about increasing access to health care services, which speaks directly to the issues raised by the Premier of our infrastructural development projects.

Madam Speaker, we are charmed by the commitments made by the Honourable Premier in her address as far as the rapid development of social infrastructure is concerned. Our unflinching commitment in building new health care amenities as a response to ensuring that our people have access to quality health care in their vicinities, is highly commendable.

This is a fundamental demonstration of our resolve to deliver quality public health services to our people according to our manifesto's commitments and The Declaration of Alma-Ata as adopted at the International Conference on Primary Health Care of 1978. Sithunyiwe and we are responsive! We care! We are in the year of action!

We have invested in infrastructure and some of these projects are now nearing completion. Soon we will be opening some of these state of the art health facilities like Bethal Hospital and Rockdale CHC just to mention a few. We will pursue our plans of completing all the other projects we have started and ensuring that our facilities contribute positively to the provision of quality health care services.

Honourable Speaker, it is an open secret that we inherited facilities designed to serve a limited number of people. Our population has since grown since we took over government and most of our facilities requires urgent maintenance to equip them to allow us to deliver the excellence services to our people. As such, the 2% for the maintenance that the

Premier directed us and all Departments to prioritise for maintenance will ensure that we address such maintenance backlog.

Honourable Premier, you have eloquently and elaborately indicated that we are going to procure 67 additional EMS vehicles, this is on top of the 52 that we procured this financial year. The increase in the number of our EMS fleet will ensure that our response time is improved.

While people access health care services in our facilities it is our responsibility to ensure that they are safe in all aspects. Tata Nelson Mandela once said that safety and security don't just happen but they are the result of collective consensus and public investment.

Hence we have prioritised the physical safety of our patients and staff by ensuring that we work closely with the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport to finalise the installation of turnstiles at Witbank, Middleburg and Mapulaneng Hospitals- which are our hot spot hospitals.

We are also busy with the procurement processes for the digitalisation of security systems such as installation of CCTV cameras and panic buttons in health facilities, as outlined by the premier.

YEAR OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

Honourable Chairperson, this year has been declared the "Year of Nursing and Midwifery" by the World Health Organisation in celebrating the bi-centenary birthday of Florence Nightingale, who is famous for changing the way nurses were perceived, raising the standards for nurses and also educating nurses.

As the Province we shall use the Year of Nursing and Midwifery to continue to position nurses as the key driver of our Primary Health Care system and the pillar to achieving Universal Health Coverage.

Nurses are pivotal to achieving good health and well-being of individuals in general and are the face of the Department as they are usually the first contact for our patients.

As the Province, we continue to identify the gaps that exist in the nursing and midwifery fraternity, which include amongst others the need to provide nurses with the requisite skills, tools and infrastructure to allow them to deliver quality health services.

We continue to honour the contribution that is made by nurses, and of course other workers in our daily lives.

Honourable Chair, our President and Premier has called us to action, and proclaimed 2020, the Year of Action. However, for us this shall not be another slogan for the year – we are going to give life and meaning to what action means. However, it has always been my conviction that as the Health Department we have always been geared into the action mode.

Honourable Speaker, the commitments made by the Premier are supporting our course towards the provision of quality healthcare and increase the life of our citizens.

Honourable Speaker, I am proud to stand in front of this august house and announce that the health system has taken a sharp turn in the province. Our people live longer than before; our provincial life expectancy has been in an upward trajectory for the past ten (10) years- this is indicative of a functional health system in the province.

The Department has over the past years worked diligently to realise the National Development Plan (NDP) targets for both average male and female life expectancy at birth to improve to 70 years by 2030.

The provision of quality healthcare has seen the male and female life expectancy at birth in Mpumalanga improve from 53 years for males and 56 years for females for the period 2006 to 2011; and 57 years for males and 63 years for females for the period 2011 to 2016 to 61 years for males and 67 years for females (average of 64.2 years) according to the Mid-Year Population Estimates 2018.

The increase in life expectancy is as a result of improve health outcomes. Honourable Speaker, less and less of our mothers in the province are dying while giving birth, our Maternal Mortality has been reducing from 133 per 100 000 live births in 2014/15 to below 64 per 100 000 live births since the beginning of the 2019/20 financial year to date.

This tells us that our interventions are bearing fruit as more and more women are becoming more educated about enrolling in the Antenatal Care (ANC) programme and to date; over 78% of women are enrolling into the ANC programme within their first pregnancy trimester (20 weeks).

Honourable Speaker, less children below the age of 5 years are dying in the province and this is attributed to the effectiveness of our Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) programme.

Honourable Speaker, we are seeing more and more HIV infected people enrolling on the Antiretroviral (ARV) programme, which is one of our interventions, which suppresses the virus to prevent transmission and leads to our people living longer.

Less than 1% of HIV positive mothers are transmitting the virus (HIV) to their newly born children. This is due to an effective management of the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission programme and the ARV treatment programme.

Madam Speaker, I know for a fact that no one will dare contest me when I say, the State of the Province Address as delivered by the honourable Premier was a symbolic and panoptic reflection of the pertinent collective aspirations and wishes of our people as pronounced by the previous SOPA of 2019 which presented in this strategic platform as mandated to us humble servants of the people of Mpumalanga by our people who reaffirmed their trust in the ANC to be their true representative, and not the other way around. Our people continue to be resolute in their total abnegation of the dull opposition parties found to be lingering in the province.

Chair, the Premier in her closing of her SOPA indicated, “It is our responsibility to ensure that we serve as the moral compass that will ignite the flame for the moral regeneration our Province”.

Let me expand on the moral and values of the late state president Nelson Mandela whose, morality was not theoretical but practical. Morality provides a touchstone from which one could measure one's actions and guide one's decisions. As leaders of this generation, we must have strong moral values, which guided our politics; furthermore, we must understand that revolutionaries are grounded in morality and principle values.

I thank you