

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR HEALTH MEC: HONOURABLE SASEKANI
MANZINI, FOR THE DEBATE POST THE POLICY AND BUDGET
SPEECH OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
26 JUNE 2020 AT MPUMALANGA LEGISLATURE, MBOMBELA**

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker;
Honourable Chief Whip of the Majority party;
Honourable Premier, Mme Refilwe Mtshweni -Tsipane;
Chairperson and Members of the Portfolio Committee on Health.
Honourable Members of the Legislature;
Colleagues in the Executive Council;
HOD of Health Dr S Mohangi,
Heads of other Provincial Departments,
Departmental officials and all Government officials
Distinguished guests;
Ladies and gentlemen;
Comrades and friends;

Madam Speaker we are convened here today when the country is surrounded by a dark cloud which the President, President Cyril Ramaphosa has termed the second pandemic, Gender Based Violence (GBV). We are surrounded by this dark cloud, our sisters, mothers, daughters and even grandmothers are scared of their lives at the hands of men. These men have brought fear to us women because we can be beaten, raped, mutilated and murder by the men who claim to love and care for us.

This stems from the patriarchal society South Africa is, we have taught our boys and men that they are superior to our girl child and GBV is one

result of such teachings. The President speaking on Monday on the virtual Tripartite Alliance dialogue on GBV warned us about patriarchy and I quote: **“Patriarchy is practised and exercised by men, and men think that they’re more superior to women and some men believe that they own the women and therefore they can order them around, beat them up, rape them and kill them,”**

It is important to realise that we are all involved, both men and women, in the perpetuating of patriarchy in our society by the very fact that we participate in socialising boys to think that they superior than women. This is what we are reaping today - a society that is ravaged by GBV and the senseless killing of women throughout the country. These are the fruits of patriarchy that live amongst us.

Patriarchy like all forms of oppression including race and class should be fought with all our might. Hence, I would like to emphasise the call made by the President on Monday said.... **“I’m hoping that with this initiative we will start a massive movement, a massive movement that should rage throughout the country where we get men to realise and to be aware that women are not their objects, women are not their punch bags, women are not there to be raped or killed,”**

I would like to call on all man to heed the call and make sure that this movement should manifest in our Province and in our communities. Where men gather can you please call each other out and educate each other of the ill-gotten privileges that comes with patriarchy and let us protect our women. Women also want to walk the street and feel safe from all forms of harm or oppression; we are all humans and should treat each

other as such. Men should take the lead in this struggle against GBV in support of our women.

Madam Speaker on Tuesday the 22nd of June 2020, I opened my budget vote with a quote from Former President Mbeki resignation speech in 2008: **“gloom and despondency have never defeated adversity. Trying times need courage and resilience. Our strength as a people is not tested during the best of times. As we said before, we should never become despondent because the weather is bad nor should we turn triumphalist because the sun shines.”**

These are not normal times instead, these are very extra-ordinary times that seek all hands to be on deck. We shouldn't be despondent because the weather is bad, this is the time where we should hold our head high in our fight against the Coronavirus pandemic. The COVID-19 has presented us with huge challenges and has taken us to uncharted waters and hence we have to make extra-ordinary scarifies.

Madam Speaker the Department of Health in the country have been put in the spotlight by the fact that the Coronavirus is a health disaster or crisis and thus it needs us to be in the forefront to fight it.

Madam Speaker, the Alma-Ata International Conference convened in September 1978 guides our mandate to save and protect every single life regardless of race, gender, creed, class or socio-economic circumstances. Having identified widespread inequities in the global health system, Alma-Ata mobilised all nations to build a health system for all and place health to sustenance of social goals, social justice and economic development.

The Department of Health in Mpumalanga is committed to revitalise primary health care by reinvigorating the role that community stakeholders should play in the entire process to define their own health needs, developing solutions, and implementing and evaluating programmes.

To advance this the Department of Health in Mpumalanga adopted the clinic-based model to the management of COVID-19 that I launched in Mkhondo on the 22 June 2020 to advance this vision, identified by the architects of the primary health care system. The promotion and protection of the health of the people is essential to sustained economic and social development and contributes to a better quality of life and the developmental state that we all envision.

Madam Speaker, as the Province we have made huge advances in flattening the curve and containing the virus and the numbers speak for themselves. We are not being triumphalist because the sun shines but this give us hope and courage to confront the virus head-on and strengthen our efforts to win this war we are confronted with.

Madam Speaker, once again I stress that this is made possible by our committed frontline workers and I would like to thank them again for the sacrifices they make to provide quality services to the community to save lives. Frontline workers, the continued achievements and progress we are making in this fight would not be possible without you. Thank you.

Health is government's apex priority at the moment because the Coronavirus kills and we have to save and preserve lives. Thus the

doomsayers and prophet of doom who have been pushing for the blocking of the NHI because their neo-liberal agenda are now quiet. Because the Coronavirus has awakened them that the market, laissez-faire cannot solve all the problems of the country and health care in particular. The laissez faire principle argues and I quote **“that the less the government is involved in the economy, the better off business will be—and by extension, society as a whole. Laissez-faire economics are a key part of free market capitalism.”**

We have witnessed that when a catastrophe like Coronavirus hits everyone, the market turns to the Government for solutions, the private sector alone is failing to respond to this crisis. Government is leading this fight and thus I argue that this Coronavirus is laying the foundation for the implementation of the National Health Insurance.

Madam, I stand to congratulate the Minister of Finance, Hon Tito Mboweni, for delivering a people-centred supplementary budget, which re-affirmed health as the apex priority of the ANC-led government. We appreciate the appropriation of funds to combat COVID-19.

Madam Speaker as the saying goes like *“Every Crisis Presents an Opportunity”*- The COVID-19 crisis has presented an opportunity to fast track the implementation of the NHI, as it came at a time when we were at the initial stages of its implementation. One of our Revolutionary leaders that inspired the world over, the father of the Cuban Revolution, Comandante Fidel Castro once said I quote ***“A revolution is not a bed of roses. A revolution is a struggle to the death between the future and the past.”***

Madam Speaker and honourable members I imagine the NHI as a Revolution which will change the South African Health care system as we know it, it must be implemented and it is a struggle to the death between the future and the past. Future generations will receive health care based on their needs and not their socio-economic status. We are revolutionising our health care system with the NHI and NHI is here to stay.

Madam Speaker the future generations will benefit from this COVID-19 crisis as it would have laid the foundations for the NHI. We cannot have a society where only 16-17% of the population who have the means to afford a medical aid can access health care. We are equalising the playing field and each according to their needs and not purse, this is what the NHI is bringing to our people. It is no longer business as usual or a bed of roses, change is coming, the NHI is here.

Madam Speaker as outlined by our Government NHI policy I quote: **“The NHI aims to ensure that all citizens and residents of South Africa, irrespective of socioeconomic status, have access to good-quality health services provided by both the public and private sectors, thereby eradicating financial barriers to health care access. The NDP envisions a health system that works for everyone, produces positive health outcomes and is accessible to all.”**

Honourable members the NHI is our New Jerusalem and all our people will receive good-quality health care, this is the equal and just society that we were promised by the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter pronounces I quote **“A preventive health scheme shall be run by the state; Free medical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children.”**

Madam Speaker the NHI seeks to make the promises of Freedom Charter a reality and thus we are ushering ahead to make it a reality and fulfil the fact that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. The NHI will achieve a sustainable, equitable and affordable universal access to good-quality healthcare service. We have been engaging our people in the Province through roadshows, educating them on the NHI bill which was released for public comments in August 2019. The response has been positive and our people are eagerly awaiting its full rollout. The NHI will assist in making sure that we improve life expectancy of our people.

Madam Speaker the South African Government has stated and I quote: **“By 2030, the NDP expects South Africa to have, among other things, raised the life expectancy of South Africans to at least 70 years; produced a generation of under-20s that is largely free of HIV; achieved an infant mortality rate of less than 20 deaths per thousand live births, including an under-five mortality rate of less than 30 per thousand; achieved a significant shift in equity, efficiency and quality of health service provision.”**

Madam Speaker we are on our road to achieving these as numbers don't lie - in 2014/2015 financial year life expectancy stood at 54,6years and 2019/20 financial year we at 64 6years. This is significant improvement and as highlighted above, with the NHI on the horizon we are more likely to surpass this by 2030 as projected in the NDP. Hence the Department is committed to achieving this goal and this will be achieved if we improve the health of our people and attack preventative diseases. Hence we have put aside funds to the tune of R22 million to procure CTG machines, delivery beds, baby warmers and incubators for maternity wards ; all in our effort to deal with infant mortality rate.

Madam Speaker on 21 May 2020 the Department launched the pilot of the Queue Management System at the Themba Hospital. I am proud to announce that this system at Themba Hospital is assisting the hospital to put internal controls in place. The Department will incrementally implement this system in all our hospitals in order to reduce queues and the time our people wait to receive medical attention thereby improving the efficiency of our hospitals and will be the new normal moving forward.

Conclusion

Madam Speaker and honourable members in closing I would like to again thank our frontline workers without whom the Department would not be able to fulfil its mandate. We are in trying times in a world ravaged by the novel Coronavirus; this is not the time for us to be despondent because the weather is bad but to continue the fight as the storm is on the horizon.

Liduma lindlule!

The storm shall pass!

I thank you.