

**SPEAKING NOTES OF THE MEC OF HEALTH IN  
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, Ms SASEKANI MANZINI ON  
THE OCCASSION OF WELCOMING MEDICAL INTERNS  
AND COMMUNITY SERVERS AT NGWENYAMA LODGE.**

21 January 2020, Tuesday

Program Director,  
Executive Mayors,  
Head of Department,  
Senior officials of the Department,  
Esteemed guest,  
Members of the Media,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted and honoured to be here on behalf of Mpumalanga Department of Health to officially welcome 590 medical interns and community server that will be commencing their professional medical practice in different fields in the provision of quality health service.

Today's ceremony undoubtedly signifies Government's commitment towards service delivery and I am therefore very proud to introduce this group of newly qualified public servants.

The Community Service Programme in the health sector was introduced as an important intervention to ensure the availability of critical human resources in underserved areas of the country and also to provide an enabling environment for new professionals to acquire experience.

In terms of the Community Service Programme, health professionals are legally required to complete a year of community service before they can be registered for independent practice.

As we gather here today, I want to assure you here and the people of the Mpumalanga at large that our Government of the ANC remains committed and acknowledges that good health is critical in enhancing human development and facilitating the process of economic growth and development.

It is for this reason that we are implementing reforms in the health sector with a view of improving the quality of healthcare services to our people especially the working class and the poor.

We are however faced with a challenge in attracting health professionals to our province. Despite this we continue to push boundaries to ensure that we address and meet the challenges head-on.

Ladies and gentlemen, in welcoming you here today I want to encourage you to be committed and dedicated to your work and make use of every opportunity to learn whilst you are undergoing your internship and community service.

We trust that all of you will make the most out of your year as you are preparing to become the best in your respective fields of expertise and specialisation.

Most of you are aware that our country, as well as our Province is experiencing some challenges relating to the attitude, morale and caring ethos of our health professionals.

I therefore urge you to undertake to uphold the principles indicated in the pledge throughout your careers in order to restore the values and ethics entrenched in the medical profession and gain back the confidence of our people in our public servants.

Further to this, I would like to implore you to uphold the principles of quality health care in our system. As a Province we are working hard to improve the management of our health facilities as a critical aspect of moving the health system forward.

As this Department, we have for some time articulated a vision of providing equitable quality healthcare services for the people of Mpumalanga. At the heartbeat of this is the revitalisation and overhaul of our Primary Health Care.

I am a firm believer that most of you are not here by choice nor circumstance. Most- if not all of you- did not choose to become medical practitioners. I believe that the health profession chose you to be the servants of the people.

Whilst it will be challenging - I can assure you it will be worth the time, sacrifice and commitment you pour into your work during your service period.

Over time you will undoubtedly form very close bonds with the people you serve and the professionals who will guide you on

your journey in becoming fully fledged health care professionals and specialists.

As your MEC I want to lobby you that upon completion of your community service program, you must consider continuing to build your careers here in Mpumalanga Province. Over time you will find the province to be stable and growing in leaps and bounds.

You must always remember that your achievement today is not the end of the road of your struggle, but the beginning of yet another phase in your working lives.

It is the dawn of a new phase that comes with even greater responsibilities, that requires accountability, strategic leadership and adherence to the pledge that you made to uphold the ethics of the health profession.

We are glad to have you here and hope that you will serve our people with diligence and utmost care. The noble profession puts

to the test your individual values of respect, dignity, care, passion, empathy and compassion.

We are appealing to all of you to work with us in providing our people the respected and dignified quality healthcare they so deserve. You must always remember that Health is a Human Right and not a privilege!

Program Director today as I welcome this newly qualified group of health professionals, I do so at a time when the health care system is at cross-roads. We must choose the best route, which is the NHI. I am painfully aware that there are two different groups of people in the case of NHI.

There are those who correctly and legitimately hope that NHI will bring relief in their everyday hardships as far as their health care is concerned. And they are of course very right.

However, the other group are those eagerly waiting for any negative development and vowed to do everything in their power to stop NHI dead in its tracks.

The problem is that many believe that NHI is just the release of a document. For us in Health, we know that it also involves an extensive preparation of the healthcare system. So it is also in your hands to re-engineer the Health Care System in the best interest of the people.

It is important to take cognizance that NHI is not only about the creation of a funding grid and enhancement of the infrastructural standards. NHI is equally and most importantly about the warm bodies, that provide various services.

You are an important component of the NHI implementation, and it is for this reason that I expect the best possible service from you.

Program director before I conclude let me emphasize the importance of community service practitioners' role in the health system. The community service professionals are a necessary asset particularly in rural and underserved areas.

In these communities, the addition of a single healthcare worker to an already resource constrained facility makes a significant difference to service delivery.

One of the major challenge at our disposal is that most health care professionals prefer to work in urban areas. This results in the shortage of professionals for rural areas. Healthcare users in rural areas are challenged with few health facilities and very few healthcare workers.

This together with extremely challenging terrain makes it exceptionally difficult for patients to access the limited services that are available. However the presence of all of you in rural areas allow for outreach services into the community.

Without this very necessary service, many rural health users may never realise the right to access health. HOD, as we distribute and place these colleagues let us have rural areas in mind and prioritise them so that we intervene in the current situation in our rural areas.



As medical interns you will serve for two years, during this you will be exposed to different clinical domains - learn as much as possible.

It is with great pleasure to also announce that our province is accredited by the Health Professional Council of South Africa (HPCSA) to increase the number of medical interns from 144 to 200. This is a great achievement because facilities like Ermelo will also assist in training 12 interns.

I must also acknowledge that as a Province we do not have adequate Specialists. HOD I wish to thank your leadership being visionary in introducing the registrar programme whereby our own doctors from the province are trained in various specialities and come back to serve the people of Mpumalanga. We already have 34 doctors training, the future looks bright for our interns to learn and increase the number of Specialists in our province.

In conclusion I want you to know that you are welcome in this beautiful province. Professionally you must know that you are in the frontline of the battleground of this era. You are now the sentinels, the guardians because of the huge responsibility you have taken to save lives of the people of the province.

With these few words, I wish you well on your internship and community service and in your careers. We will be monitoring your progress very closely and we will do whatever is humanly possible to ensure that a conducive environment exists for your training and that you will continue your careers here and assist us to realise our vision.

I thank you!