

**Remarks by Eastern Cape Premier, Hon. Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane at the NCOP Debate on Youth Poverty and Unemployment held on August 24, 2021.**

**NCOP Chairperson**

**Members of the NCOP**

**Premiers**

**Invited Guests**

Good afternoon and thank you very much for affording us an opportunity to participate in this very important debate. We convene here at a time when our province is under a dark cloud following the brutal killing of a young woman in our province, Ms Nosicelo Mtebeni who was a student at the University of Fort Hare. She was the daughter of an unemployed mother and a street hawker father and was due to become the first ever graduate in her family and had bold plans to take her family out of poverty. Iphupha lakhe nelekhaya lakhe liqhawulwe phambi kokuba lifezikiswe. I am mentioning her incident in this august house to remind all of us that the fight against GBV and femicide also needs our attention as it continues to be a dark mark in our young democracy. May the soul of Nosicelo and all other young people we have lost recently even in the violent protests that we saw in KZN and Gauteng rest in peace.

Honourable Chairperson, we agree that poverty and unemployment in South Africa affects young people and black youth in particular. The labour market which has been impacted negatively by covid-19 is not absorbing our youth enough. Young people in the Eastern Cape are not immune to this national challenge.

We have dedicated the sixth term of government as a term to turn around the socio-economic fortunes of our young people. We are guided by the Provincial Youth Development Strategy which directs us to integrate youth development into the mainstream of government work. This means that youth development imperatives

must be embedded into the work of every department and agency of our Provincial Government. In this regard, the Office of the Premier takes direct responsibility for driving the Provincial Youth Development Strategy and the implementation of the flagship youth development programmes across the province.

Our achievements in the period under review are that a total of 13,375 unemployed youth benefitted from government skills programmes:

- Bursaries: 3,952
- Internships: 5,663
- TVET College Placements: 2,326
- Skills Programmes: 781
- Learnerships: 2,856

These skills programme are spread across the priority sectors of our economy as outlined in the provincial development plan. We have trained young people in Manufacturing; Automotive skills; Oceans Economy; Agro-processing; and SMME Development.

Our efforts to upskill the youth of our province have been augmented by the sound and practical programmes we are currently implementing with various SETAs. We have already netted three SETAs which are the Public Sector SETA (PSETA), the Construction SETA (CETA) and the Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA) and they are also joined by SITA. They are making a combined R33.8 investment in the youth of our province. This means 1230 young people will wake up every day to report for skills training and receive a stipend every month. We are pursuing the other 18 SETAs to support our efforts, because government has limited resources to undertake this task. We know the SETAs themselves have limited resources, hence we appreciate the little they are doing to empower our youth.

Chairperson, of critical importance is that we have realized that the labour market will not absorb all our young people and thus we devised a dedicated support programme for young entrepreneurs. We are aware that the banking system in South Africa is not friendly to start ups, hence we started the Isiqalo Youth Fund to support young entrepreneurs, who can in turn employ other young people. Since 2019 we have supported 49 youth owned businesses to the value of R16 million. As I speak here, we are receiving multitudes of applications from young people who are looking to get assistance from the Fund which has a budget of R38 million in the current financial year.

Chairperson, these are dedicated strides we are making to alleviate poverty and youth unemployment in our province. They are augmenting what the other spheres of government and the private sector are doing to place our youth at the centre of economic reconstruction.

We will continue to forge ahead with these programmes despite the economic challenges that covid-19 has brought us.

Thank you.