

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MS BATHABILE
DLAMINI, ON THE OCCASSION OF TWEELING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTRE,
TWEELING FREE STATE**

1 November 2012

Programme Director,
Honourable Premier, Mr Ace Magashule,
MEC for Social Development, Mama Sisi Ntombela,
Executive Mayor of Fezile Dabi Municipality, Mr M P Moshodi,
Councillors and all local leaders here present,
Distinguished Guests,
Young lions,
Boys and girls,
Young Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your warm welcome and kind invitation to be part of this auspicious celebration this morning.

It is a great pleasure to be here in the presence of so many bright and capable young South Africans who are committed to build a future for themselves and their communities.

Today, one cannot help but remember the poignant words of one of the founding members of the ANC Youth League and former President of the ANC, the late Comrade Oliver Reginald Tambo, when he said, and I quote:

“A nation that does not care of its youth has no future and does not deserve one”.

It is many years since O R Tambo expressed these words and today we are gathered here to heed this clarion call. As we meet here today, an alarming number of our youth are unemployed and are in desperate need of job opportunities.

It is against this background that we must see the importance of youth development in South Africa. It is also against this background that we welcome this important initiative.

The work and focus of the Tweeling Youth Development Centre presents us with a unique opportunity not only to heed Tambo's clarion call, but also to recognise the aspirations and potential of our young people.

We can all agree that there is a need for more opportunities for our young people to be able to develop into good productive citizens.

From the outset, I would like to congratulate the visionary leadership of the Free State Province, and the provincial Department of Social Development in particular, for this initiative, which will bring O R Tambo's ideals to fruition.

Our hope is that this Centre will help our young people take advantage of opportunities created by our Government and translate them into a life of productivity, and more importantly, a better life for themselves, their families and their communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This event takes place at the most opportune moment in the history of our country. The year 2012 marks an important historical milestone in our liberation struggle.

It is the year in which we celebrate the selfless sacrifices of our people in the struggle against apartheid and colonialism.

We also celebrate the contribution of our young people towards the attainment of freedom and democracy that we now enjoy in our country.

Last week, President Jacob Zuma released the results of the 2011 National Census, which once again confirm that South Africa is a youthful population.

This demands that we channel our energy and resources towards building the critical mass and cadre of young people who will play an active role in building the future of our country.

Our Government takes the issue of youth development seriously. To ensure that our country reap this demographic dividend and accelerate socio-economic development, particularly in areas where we are lagging behind, the current administration has identified five priorities, namely education, job creation, health, rural development, and crime and corruption.

I am pleased to learn that in addition to the opening of this Centre, the Provincial Department of Social Development will also open three Early Childhood Development centres that will benefit our young children.

I therefore congratulate MEC Ntombela and her team for taking this important step which will accelerate our youth development programmes.

As parents, community leaders and Government, we must work together to support our young people to make wise and healthy decisions about their lives.

The vision of this centre is very important. To create a supportive environment where young people in the community are encouraged to express themselves and explore their God-given talents.

The work and focus of the Tweeling Youth Development Centre is intended to do exactly that. This centre will empower our young people to identify and develop their creative talents, as well as support them in their journey towards active citizenship as envisaged in the Masupatsela Youth Pioneer Programme.

It will also serve as one of the primary measures of intervention in tackling the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

The job readiness workshops and the sports and recreation activities that will take place here will help to ensure that vulnerable young people can be empowered with necessary life skills to lead positive lives.

It will also contribute towards addressing social issues confronting our youth today. These include substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections including HIV and AIDS, as well as teenage pregnancy.

Young Ladies and Gentlemen,

The opening of this Centre is in line with Government's policy which advocates for the economic empowerment of the disadvantaged, and the youth are the largest part of this group. We need to take

stock of the challenges and opportunities that young people encounter in life so that we can formulate strategies and practical initiatives that seek to empower all our young people.

It is in this regard that we will be hosting the National Youth Camp from 2-7 December this year here in the Free State Province. It is my hope therefore, that this Centre and other initiatives being implemented by Government through various Ministries and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), will go a long way in alleviating the challenges confronting our young people today. I believe that this will take youth away from the streets and negative risky behaviours into productive activities. Our Government is implementing a number of initiatives for the empowerment of our youth. Amongst others, these include the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC), National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), Youth Build Project, Masupatsela Youth Pioneer Programme, as well as through learnership and internship programme.

All these initiatives are designed to give our youth leadership and entrepreneurial skills, so that they can confidently face the future and play a more meaningful role in building the type of society we want.

Some of these initiatives are aimed at supporting young people to start or expand their businesses through availing finance and promoting self-employment initiatives. The income generating and capacity building programmes of this Centre will therefore complement these efforts.

Programme Director,

Let me also encourage all youth gathered here to take the opportunities that Government has created through some of the initiatives that I allude to earlier. As Government, we recognise the contributions that youth can make in promoting peace and national development, and we are giving you opportunities and skills to participate actively in the life of our nation.

I therefore call upon business and other stakeholders to work hand in hand with youth, and encourage young people from across South Africa to seize the opportunity that our Government has created for them.

To all partners involved in this Centre, we say thank you and well done. We hope that this rising sun that we have seen today will never set. The beginning of this fruitful public private partnership is an encouraging one.

It is my hope that this Centre and other youth development initiatives will create a future and hope for our young people. Indeed, the Free State Provincial Government must be congratulated for a job well done.

I would like to conclude by once again congratulating everyone involved in the Tweeling Youth Development Centre and all of those who have assisted with the development of this new and vibrant initiative.

This centre is an exciting example of a Government that cherishes young people and understands the necessity for encouraging them to become active participants in their communities and in our society. We hope that other provinces will learn from this positive initiative.

I thank you.