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**INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY THE FREE STATE PREMIER**

**HON MXOLISI DUKWANA**

**23 FEBRUARY 2023**

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Madame Speaker

Honorable Outgoing Premier

Members of the Executive Council

Members of the Legislature

Marena le Dikgosi

Executive Mayors, Mayors, Honourable Speakers, Chief Whips and  
Councillors

Director General of the Province

Heads of Departments

Veterans and Stalwarts of our Liberation Struggle

Distinguished Guests

The people of our province, Free State

Ladies and Gentlemen

I stand before you in humility and honour, humbled by the confidence that my organisation, the African National Conference, and the people of our beautiful province have bestowed upon me to lend a hand in building a better tomorrow for all our people.

It is a singular honour that amongst all well-meaning activists in our province [and there is many], this August house has chosen me to be the messenger of hope and human solidarity in a province that is beset by a plethora of challenges. However, what I do not take for granted is that;

This day belongs to the people of our province

It is a day of hope and restoration

It is a day to reclaim our glory and pride

It is a day for women in whose beautiful bellies nations are born

It is a day for the LGBTIQ+ community whose humanity was denied

It is a day for young people whose futures were stolen

It is a day to affirm their rightful place as leaders of tomorrow

As we gather here today, there are scores of young people standing lines fighting for admission at various institutions of higher learning. Their imagination seething with fury over blatant commodification of a basic human right promised by the freedom charter.

Buried in their hearts is a deep yearning for a break from chains of poverty and a better future for themselves. They long for when they shall care for their domestic worker mothers, their landscaping fathers and their uncles whose light was dimmed by years of state capture in the province.

And today as we think of them, we petition the striking spirit of Nina Simone in her pivotal meditations:

*Young, gifted and black*

*Oh what a lovely precious dream*

***To be young, gifted and black***

*Open your heart to what I mean*

*In the whole world you know*

*There's a million boys and girls*

***Who are young, gifted and black***

*And that's a fact*

*"You are young, gifted and black"*

*We must begin to tell our young*

***There's a world waiting for you***

*Yours is the quest that's just begun*

*When you feelin' really low*

*Yeah, there's a great truth that you should know*

***When you're young, gifted and black***

*Your soul is intact*

Today, we celebrate the triumph of the human spirit that defeated the monstrous criminal networks whose sole intention was to deny a whole province the delightful taste of achievement and prosperity.

The resilience of the people triumphed over evil spirits which adorned every street masked in revolutionary regalia. Today would not have been possible without the unflinching prayers of Vrede Dairy beneficiaries whose dream of becoming respectable farmers was thrashed by marauding gangs who profited from their collective misery [and the prayers of many men and women of valour whose prayers have seen us through difficult challenges as we navigated this journey.](#)

We are deeply grateful for the sacrifices of those who lost their livelihoods in the fight against the criminal networks who sought re-purpose the public purse into personal piggy-banks. [The workers in municipalities and provincial departments whose deaths remain a mystery and their killers not yet brought to book.](#) We recognise with appreciation all men and women who continuously improve the capacity of our government to deliver quality services. We are indebted to the people of our province whose constructive criticism keeps government in check.

They too feel the pain caused by failing infrastructure but they soldier on, the devastating potholes that decorate our roads is not sufficient hardship to kill their vision of an achieving and prosperous province. Despite the

fact that they go to bed hungry, they never capitulate to a narrative that our colonial and apartheid past was better than today. In their resolve, they refuse to be swayed by soothsayers whose message of doom is calculated to throw them in the abyss of unending melancholy.

We owe a degree of indebtedness to such a spirit that today we commit ourselves to ensuring that every Free State citizen is given the means to work, to have roof over their heads, to educate their children, to live in safer neighbourhoods and to heighten their horizon.

It is our vision to build a society where such a spirit dominates, a society wherein difficulties are transformed into opportunities. It is a yearning for a democratic tomorrow where race, gender and class are not seen as markers of one's own humanity. Our resolve is to build a society where for survival is not mistaken weakness, a society in which the misery of some is a source of joy to others.

We have arrived at a historic moment in our province where momentum for greatness has been generated. Our painful past has been extraordinarily important because it has embedded on our collective psyche the unity we never imagined was possible.

During our tenure, embracing talent and ability is going to be an overarching principle because contemporary challenges require innovation. Gone are the days when opportunities are given only to loved

ones and the politically connected; nepotism and neopatrimonialism shall be a non-existent ethic during this period.

Regrettably, there are some amongst us who have by now adopted the culture of accumulating wealth by any means necessary – and who would be waiting for an opportunity to prevail. This is completely extraneous to the political programme we represent, it is not in sync with unity and renewal about which our successive conferences have been lyrical. It is decidedly incongruent with the society we are seeking to build.

Therefore, our first mission shall be to enthuse ourselves with a new ethic; to choose service over self-service. Our predilection shall be to serve our communities in order for communities to serve us. We shall not dine on behalf of the people neither shall we covet means to serve our people.

This is indeed our moment

It is a moment to pick up the pieces

It is a moment to build anew

It is a moment to protect our hard-won democracy

Once again let me take this opportunity to thank you all for the opportunity to serve our people at this level. It is a difficult mandate but certainly not insurmountable for a determined and calloused people like ourselves.

God Bless You!

