

Address at the launch of the expanded public works programme

Gugulethu Township, Western Cape, 2 September 2004

Minister of Public Works, Stella Sigcau,
Premier of the Western Cape, Ebrahim Rasool,
MEC for Transport and Public Works, Mcebisi Skwatsha,
Mayor of the City of Cape Town, Nomaindia Mfeketho,
Honourable MP's, MEC's, Mayors and Councillors,
Honoured Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am happy to launch the Western Cape Expanded Public Works Programme today, here in Gugulethu. As we know, this is an important programme of government, which is aimed at creating the much-needed infrastructure and services in the urban and rural areas of our country, especially in the townships and villages that have been neglected for many years.

Through the Expanded Public Works Programme government is continuing with its task of pushing back the frontiers of poverty and create work for our people. You would have noticed that this programme has given many people an opportunity to work - people whose desperate and desolate existence was a blot to the enormous achievements of our ten years of freedom.

Through this and other programmes we make true our people's contract, of working in partnerships with all sectors of our society and the masses of our people, to create a better South Africa for all her citizens.

Though this programme and others we are accelerating the pace of our work and improving the quality of our products such that, in time, we must reach a point where there would not be a difference between the township of Gugulethu and the suburb of Rondebosch. We have a duty to use all our resources, in the public and private sectors, to work towards a situation where the roads, services, shopping complexes and economic opportunities are the same in every part of South Africa, irrespective of whether one area used to be designated exclusively to blacks or to whites.

We have a duty as South Africans, to bring to a stop the economic boycott of our own areas by some of our own people whereby vast resources would rather lie idle than to be invested in black areas.

As government we invest in infrastructure such as through the Expanded Public Works Programme because we believe that as we fight poverty and create work, we need at the same time, to stimulate the creativity and energy of our people to fight the depressing marginalisation of their areas.

Accordingly, for this programme to have a lasting impact, we need strong partnerships with the private sector and the community so that we build more infrastructure and create work opportunities, particularly in poor areas such as Gugulethu, Mannenberg, Khayelitsha, Elsies River, Langa, Crossroads and other areas of the Western Cape and the rest of the country.

We are holding our meeting at NY 116 Stadium. I am told that NY stands for Native Yard, and I am not sure what the number 116 stands for. However, as we know, in our unfortunate past, the word native was used, wrongly, to refer to those who were supposed to be inferior, backward and uncivilised and accordingly not fit to live in humane and habitable conditions.

These were people who were only good to live under degrading conditions; in locations and villages that had no proper roads, no clean water, no electricity, no job opportunities and no proper clinics. These people had to live far away from their places of work and if they are lucky to work, had to toil under very bad conditions.

Today, all people, black and white, are proud to be the natives of our country, not just because it is beautiful, but because many have realised that South Africa offers greater and brighter opportunities than was thought before and that working together in the Native Yard that is South Africa, together we will enjoy a better and prosperous life.

We are happy that we are launching this programme in Gugulethu because those who forcibly removed the first residents of Gugulethu from their homes in District Six, Elsies River, Kensington and other places, thought they would condemn them to a slow death of hopelessness, poverty and despair.

However, through the heroic struggles waged by you, the people of this township, together with many more in the Western Cape and other parts of our land, you have ensured that today we celebrate ten years of freedom and we jointly make progress in our new struggle against poverty and underdevelopment.

When we participated in the Imbizo here in the Western Cape in August 2003, the people of this province raised many concerns. Among them were that:

- There are many skilled and trained young people who could not find employment;
- People find it difficult to send their children to school or higher institutions of learning because of lack of money;
- People want jobs;
- There are no economic opportunities;
- Many young people are involved in crime and alcohol and drug abuse;

Even after the Imbizo, during the election campaign many of our people continued to raise these issues. Clearly, all spheres of government are engaged in the work to address these and many other challenges. It is obviously important that we continue to give regular reports, from all spheres of government as well as different departments, about the progress that we are making in addressing these important challenges.

The Expanded Public Works Programme is one of the programmes that seek to respond and address the problems that the people of this of this province and of our country have raised in the many meetings that we had with them.

At the same time, as we respond to all our challenges through the programmes that bring a better life to all of us, we all have a bigger responsibility to protect these important assets so that those who come after us can also have the benefit of enjoying the services and infrastructure that we are building today.

Accordingly, it is the duty of all the residents of this township and the Western Cape to ensure that none among us reverses the gains of development by destroying and defacing our services and infrastructure.

The launch of this programme here in the Western Cape, follows similar launches in Limpopo, Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. Tomorrow another launch will be made in the Eastern Cape and we will complete the rest of the provinces by the end of this month.

This we are doing because together we agreed when we voted overwhelmingly for this government in the past elections, that we will work faster and harder to build a prosperous, non-racial, non-sexist democratic country.

I wish all those who are participating in this programme successful and constructive work. To the people of the Western Cape, please support this important programme and jealously guard it for it really belongs to all of you. Together we can and must work harder to create a better South Africa.

I thank you.