

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE SPEAKER OF THE KZN
LEGISLATURE TO THE 2016 PARLIAMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES**

Royal Showgrounds

01 December 2016

Programme Director

Honourable W Thusi (Representing the Premier)

Members of the Executive Council

Honourable Members of the KZN Legislature

UMgungundlovu District Municipality Mayor Cllr T. Maphumulo

UMgungundlovu District Municipality Speaker Cllr J. Ngubo

Councilors from UMgungundlovu District and All Local Municipalities

Representatives of the Traditional Leadership

Head of Departments and all government Officials

Delegates to the Disability Parliament

Panelists

Distinguished Guests

People of UMgungundlovu District

It gives me great pleasure that today we gathered here today to hold the Parliament for People with Disabilities here in UMgungundlovu District which happens just 2 days before we celebrate the International Day of People with Disabilities.

We also note that we hold this parliament while we mourn the death of one of the heroes, the former President of Cuba, Fidel Castro who played a crucial role in supporting the liberation movements which brought democracy in our country and other African states.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I always find it necessary to start by indicating what the core functions of the KZN Legislature are .The core functions of the legislature are

- Law making
- Oversight over the executive
- Enhance public participation

In this regard, the Parliament of People with Disability is held every year with a view to enhance public participation as one of our core functions with specific attention given to issues affecting people with disabilities.

Further to this, this parliament gives effect to Section 118 of South Africa's Constitution which makes provision for parliament and legislatures to involve the public on legislative matters.

Notably, on 13 December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international human rights treaty to protect the rights and dignity of people with disabilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this parliament is held under the theme “Persons with disabilities – Equal participants in shaping a sustainable future.” This theme speak volumes regarding the importance of creating space for people with disabilities to play an active role in shaping the future.

In this regard, the democratic government should be commended, in that, since 1994, the country has made significant strides in improving the conditions of people with disabilities and the following are some of the achievements.

- All children with disabilities under the age of six have access to free healthcare, including rehabilitation and assistive devices.
- A cash transfer constituting of a disability grant for both adults and children, as well as a care dependency grants for caregivers taking care of persons with profound disabilities is paid out monthly
- Persons with disabilities have access to subsidized public transport in the main centres where public transport system is available.
- Taxpayers with disabilities or taxpayers with disabled dependents are able to claim tax rebates on all disability-related expenses.
- South Africa applies affirmative action for persons with disabilities in employment and skills development.
- Job seekers and employees with disabilities are therefore protected from discrimination when seeking employment – through Employment Equity Act and Unfair Discrimination Act.

The introduction of such laws and policies since 1994, particularly the Bill of Rights under Chapter Two of the Constitution proved beyond doubt the commitment of the democratic government to protect the right of all South Africans particularly the vulnerable.

While these progressive laws and policies have been made, we are mindful of the fact people with disabilities are still subjected to various forms of abuse and maltreatment even in government institutions. We will always condemn all actions which seeks to undermine and violate

the rights of people with disabilities and those responsible will face the full might of the law.

The KZN legislature is committed to intensify its oversight mechanisms with a view to ensure that the executive delivers on its mandate as required particularly on issues affecting people with disabilities.

It is against this background that the KZN Legislature will persistently advance its agenda to create platforms where sectors will be afforded an opportunity to engage with policy makers on issues affecting the sector. We seek to enhance our education programme through our Public Participation and Petitions Unit so that the people will understand the role of the legislature and begin to play their role i.e. participate in public hearings on issues of interest to them.

In our endeavor to ensure that the sectorial parliaments have more impact, the KZN Legislature, in consultation with all sectors has adopted a new approach whereby, the focus is on reflecting on progress made in implementation of resolutions made in previous parliaments.

Departments give feedback regarding the extent to which resolutions have been implemented and provide explanations where there are challenges.

The 2015 Parliament for People with Disabilities was held at UThukela District Municipality hence the focus of engagement today will be on issues raised in that parliament.

Further to this, there are presentations which will be made by esteemed panelists and experts on different topics which are proposed by the representatives of the sector during internal planning meetings which are

followed by commissions. Instead of a mock parliament, there will be a dialogue among delegates which will culminate into resolutions. We take pride in that, we are constantly improving our programmes and our sectors are empowered.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would be failing on my duty if I don't express our displeasure and disappointment about the recent occurrences where people with albinism have been murdered for witchcraft purposes. We call on all communities to come together and protect them and we are confident that the law enforcement agencies will leave no stone unturned when investigating these crimes.

We also note that we hold this Parliament whilst observing the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children. We therefore appeal to all communities to ensure that women and children are protected, including women and children with disabilities.

I must also bring to your attention the fact that today we observe the International World Aids Day to honour those affected by the epidemic and intensify awareness campaigns to encourage people to get tested, abstain or practice safe sex.

Lastly, let me take this opportunity to wish His Majesty the King, Goodwill Zwelithini all the best as he will be celebrating 45 years since coronation as the King of the Zulus.

With those words, I wish you all the best in your engagements.

I thank you.

