

OPENING ADDRESS BY KZN SPEAKER, HONOURABLE  
NONTEMBEKO BOYCE ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2020 KZN  
VIRTUAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT

17 June 2020

Programme Director, Honourable Mbatha-Cele

Deputy Speaker Hon Ndobe

The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal

Members of the Provincial Legislature

Members of the Executive Council

The Chief Whip of the Majority Party

Secretary and all officials from the Legislature

Heads of Government Departments and Entities

Members of the Media

Delegates to from youth formations to this parliament

Our viewers from various media platforms

Ladies and Gentlemen

I greet you all

It is my singular honor to get an opportunity to open the virtual youth parliament of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. June is Youth month, a month dedicated to the celebration and commemoration of the historical significant role played by the young people in the liberation of our country, especially for young people of 1976 and 80s generations. A day the country reflects on the massacre of school children during the Soweto Uprising on 16 June 1976. Young people of South Africa in 2020 have been called upon to fight a much more silent war, the COVID-19 pandemic, and to help to rebuild society. The current war has given birth to a need to use your energy as the youth of today to rebuild the world that will allow us to survive this deadly pandemic, take charge of your future.

Despite the unwavering war waged by Covid-19 to the World as we know it, the Youth Month offers us as the Legislature an opportunity to drink from the well of wisdom that is our future leadership, the youth of our province through this platform of engagement. We are aware of the effects of COVID-19 on all of society and we are aware of its effects on the youth and therefore depends on the visionary leadership of the youth of today for a future that is not bleak but had been

reimagined and processed to place us at the center of the world yet to be defined. It is a lived reality that many young people are not be able to access this event due to lack of access to internet but the leadership of the youth of today is responsible for ensuring that their leadership will prevent that from happening in the future. Though COVID-19 is a life-threatening disease, the leadership of tomorrow must be able to take ahold of the opportunities of learning offered by this dire state of affairs through taking center stage in innovation to build a better and more promising tomorrow.

This 2020 Virtual Youth Parliament is held under the theme “Youth Power: Growing South Africa together in a period of Covid-19”

The theme talks of young people playing a pivotal role in the fight against COVID-19. You are our biggest resource and your creative minds and immense energy can be utilized to boost COVID-19 response measures and reimagine a South Africa that is sustainable, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous. You can help us harness the digital revolution and innovation witnessed during this pandemic as a catalyst for post COVID-19 economic revival, and which is key in creation of jobs for our youth. As we pause to celebrate the spirit of the young of South Africa we must remember many of them are suffering in the scary, uncertain, world of COVID-19 with the same underlying iniquities that drove them to rebellion in 1976.

Today I want to remind all viewers that we would have not been where we are, had it not been the bravery and sacrifice of young gallant fighters of 1976. Those young leaders took it upon themselves that they would barehandedly catch the bull by its sharp and piercing horns. They had no fear in fighting injustices of the time. They did not only reject but refused and resisted Bantu Education and its imposed oppressive policy of making Afrikaans the medium of instruction. They did this despite them being consciously aware that the price to pay would be supreme. Much to the dismay of the world and as expected, many of those unarmed young people perished on the barrel of apartheid guns of the brutal and heartless oppressors.

This is the story of the youth of 1976 and the youth of 2020 faces different challenges which include poverty, unemployment, inequality, diseases, discrimination, Gender Based Violence and Femicide. The current spate of killing of women is posing a threat to the very foundations of what we hold ideal as a nation. We have done all that we thought was to resolve this but each year more women and young girls die at the hands of those meant to protect them, in this Youth Parliament we must pay homage to some of the young people in our province who perished in the hands of others both female and male. We must

remember Andile Bobo Mbuthu of Tongaat, 10-year-old Lindiwe Ndwandwe, Nomvula Buthelezi of Nquthu, Sindisiwe Ndlovu and many others who perished.

Another threat to our democracy is the demon of discrimination and homophobia which manifests it in various violent acts target the LGBTIQ community. We have to be reminded that since beginning of the year many young people from this community had been raped and killed and one name that comes to mind is that of Lindo Cele from Umlazi who perished through what was thought to be a hate crime. Whilst we continue to witness this hate crime it is refreshing to know of young people like Sazi Jali of TransHope, an NPO focusing on rights and provisioning of health access to the transgender community and who has also legally transitioned. Miss Jali having survived rape and attempted rape at age 25 is a shero for having successfully graduated and recognized in the gender that she transitioned into. This is maturity of our democracy and practical demonstration of how laws enacted by parliaments should work to serve the people who elect us. With the June also being an International Pride month I want to call upon all of you young people of today to build a future that is free of any form of discrimination, including homophobia.

Programme Director the Freedom Charter pronounced under its broad principle, “The People Shall Govern” that “All shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country “This was set by our forebears as a feature amongst many others defining the true freedom as an outcome of what they were fighting for.

It is in this regard that our democratic constitution instructs us as the Provincial Legislature in section 118 that “A Provincial Legislature must facilitate public involvement in the legislative and other processes of the legislature and its committees.” Your Parliament is convened on the dictates of the constitution. This requires all of us but delegates to be alert of the fact that delegates are primarily mandated by the constitution to be here and are to work and engage in a manner that captures the spirit of the constitution in all matters pertaining the youth of our province. It is important for delegates to accept that their being here is not just an act compliance but inherent to it is continued youth activism as started by the revolutionary torch bearers of the past. Your availing yourself to be part of this virtual sitting I hope is informed by the burning desire to participate and to play a meaningful role in deepening democracy while changing the lives of many others for the better.

Your participation here today must be a defining moment in history, where young people indeed take over leadership from us the old and truly define what is to become the future of our country. This need young men and women of character,

skill and determination who are not afraid of doing new things because of being scared of failure but those who are ready to take charge of new situations and opportunities. I think of young people like Nompumelelo Xulu who is the Positive Role Model in the KZN Entrepreneur category at the 8<sup>th</sup> Gender Mainstreaming Awards, Dr Siphumelele Ndlovu of Elandskop who is one of the researchers of Indabuko Institute, a science Research Institute, Sinethemba Nzuzwa of Eyesihlahla farms in uMlalazi a young person who turned her own adversity into an opportunity, Nomandla Ngcoya a 27 year old the founder of a company called D Chem Group manufacturing detergents, Dr Mlungisi Phakathi from Hammarsdale at age 28 he is a senior Lecturer at UNISA having achieved his PHD at the age of 26 and many others who remain unsung heroes in their communities. As Legislators we need to ensure that government continues to empower, resource and create spaces for young people to excel in their chosen areas. This platform of Youth Parliament must be used to define that what you as the youth want to see happening in the country that you will lead.

The significance of your role in participation in today's Youth Parliament can best be clarified by Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* where he said: "Each generation must discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it, in relative opacity." The challenges of 1976 are no longer with us now however the country in 2020 needs the youth with the same courage in order to define the future of our country post the Covid-19. It is a choice you have to either make this platform a talk-shop or use it as per the determination of our Constitution to use it as power of the young people to govern themselves, all the power is in your hands.

We have presentations from government as per agreements with your representatives at preparation and the Premier to address you with responses on implementation of previous year's resolutions, also to make it a truly public participatory activity. We will allow for comments and questions from the public posted through our various communication platforms. I wish you well in your deliberations and hope that the young people of our province after the conclusion of this Youth Parliament they will reflect on its proceedings and resolutions and thereafter say: "Yes! It was in deed worth it."

Thank you, Programme Director, Ndiyabulela.