

**SPEECH NOTES FOR THE MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY
AND LIAISON AT THE PROVINCIAL SUMMIT ON POLICE KILLINGS HELD
ON 16 AUGUST 2011 AT THE DURBAN ICC**

Minister of Police Mr. Nathi Mthethwa;
Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Dr Zweli Mkhize;
Members of the Executive Council in attendance;
Ethekwini Metro Mayor, Jame Nxumalo;
National Police Commissioner, General Bheki Cele;
Provincial Police Commissioner, General BM Ngobeni;
Community Safety and Liaison MECs from other provinces;
Head of Departments in attendance;
Members of the JCPS Cluster;
All officials in government;
Academics;
Different Community structures;
Members of the Media;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

We take this opportunity to thank you for having honoured our invitation to this important gathering. It is our wish that our being here today will be worthwhile in the future of the province of KwaZulu-Natal in terms of safety.

It is however very unfortunate indeed that we have to be here today talking about ways of curbing killings of our police officers. There are a lot of good causes for which we should be meeting; but not under the cloud of deaths of men and women in blue.

One never wishes to have to attend a gathering of this sort because it is in some ways an admission that something has gone wrong in our society.

It is becoming too common to have news items reporting on police officers that have been slain. Again, this is an indication that something has gone wrong. Perhaps by gathering here today, we can influence a positive change as we go out to implement the resolutions of the summit.

When we started this financial year 2011/2012, as the KZN Department of Community Safety and Liaison, we declared this as the year for the '**People's Action Against Crime**'. We want to make a clarion call for communities, all social formations, youth, families and individuals to actively take a bold stand against crime in their homes, streets, neighborhoods, communities and the entire Province of KwaZulu-Natal.

In addition to this, the Department is successfully rolling out the programme of 'Building a United Front Against Crime'. This is an integrated anti-crime strategy which seeks to rally communities behind the crime-fighting cause, using Operation Hlasela as a strategy to roll out throughout the Province of KwaZulu-Natal.

We have indicated before in some of our gatherings that *Operation Hlasela* is impacting positively on the fight against crime, in that through community mass-mobilisation, we see greater confidence being built between the police and the community. This is resulting in communities being more willing to give critical crime-related information to the police, which is needed in order to arrest criminals.

Today we are here still continuing with that clarion call. We themed this summit as the "People's Action Against Police Killings", because we realize that there isn't much success if we stand divided.

Without support of community members we will not be able to find solutions to curb the problem of brutal slaying of our police officers. To accomplish this we need to stand together to develop a united front against crime.

I would like to give a brief background to our gathering today; In July this year a National Summit on Police Killings was hosted by the Minister of Police the Honourable Nathi Mthethwa, which was aimed at addressing the high number of attacks and killing of SAPS members. It has been established that policing in this country is under threat because of violence directed at the police.

The high number of murdered police officers quoted by the Minister of Police at the national summit indicates that the situation is out of hand and requires a joint effort by all structures and interest groups in our communities to bring about the necessary decrease in these horrific numbers.

The magnitude of the problem is such that the province of KwaZulu-Natal has the highest number of incidents of police killings incidents. It is therefore befitting that following the National summit, this province is the first to host its own summit. It is not only a matter of urgency, but that of 'life and death'. We believe that a society in which the confidence of the police is undermined is far from being healthy and safety.

Although KwaZulu-Natal figures come a close second to Gauteng, there is cause for concern regarding the killing of SAPS members due to the historical proliferation of various weapons, including guns, in the Province. The Province's legacy of political violence and faction fights also raises the likelihood that communities are armed with dangerous weapons.

By the time we went to the National summit last month, we were counting 178 deaths of KwaZulu-Natal police officers during the last eight years.

That is a big number, because even if we suffer a single death, it would be one death too many. We also note that since the Summit, there have been several reports of additional police killings in the province.

Following the deliberations at the National Summit, the Minister of Police announced a plan to reduce police murders. Among the most note-worthy measures are the following:

- Greater vigilance by police officers;
- The implementation of an 'Adopt-a-Cop' campaign;
- The establishment of a Multidisciplinary Committee to coordinate the safety and well-being of police officers;
- Review of the year 2000 findings on police killings by a Ministerial Task Team;
- Emphasis on the continuous training of the police, particularly firearms training;
- Improved partnerships between government, researchers and the general public;
- Greater support for family members of murdered officers.

As a province, we are here to learn from the recommendations of the National Summit. We are also here to unpack those recommendations, find ways to put them into practice in this province, explore and scrutinise possible solutions and identify role players; and then come up with a way forward which will indicate what each and every one of us will be doing from now on to deal with the scourge.

The main objectives of the provincial summit are to identify the root causes of police killings and to come up with a concerted response to the challenge. Hence during our breakaway sessions, we will be looking at four factors which are: Police killed by other police; Police killed in family disputes; Police killed by criminals; and Victims of police killings.

We are here to say that we need to encourage easy access to government's existing platforms to take care of the psychological needs of traumatised SAPS members as they endure the hazards of their job. Male or female, we are human beings who can break and be emotionally unstable hence we all need psychological intervention.

However, as a point of departure, I am of the view that the strategic initiative already underway in the Province under the banner of the 'Building a United Front Against Crime' Programme, which I referred to earlier, will also result in a safe environment for police to perform their duties.

This Programme could be utilised together with other Provincial Flagship Programmes such as 'Masisukume Sakhe', to curb police killings in the Province. We are here because we want to pledge our commitment to keeping the lives of our police officers safe so that they may do their jobs of protecting us and keeping us free from fear that this might be their last days on earth.

We are here because we want each and every one of us to remember that it will take a united stance to win this war. As I have said earlier, this is the year of "People's Action Against Crime", so let us all find and define our roles in this fight.

It is paramount that the suggestions and resolutions that will come out from this gathering need to be turned into action as soon as possible, before we lose another officer.

I thank you!