SA: Ndebele: Address by the Minister of Transport, at the Launch of the Eastern Cape Road Safety Council, East London

13 Sep 2010

Programme director
Premier of the Eastern Cape Ms Noxolo Kiviet
MEC for Roads and Transport Ms Ghishma Barry
Executive Mayor
Councillors
Traditional leaders
Government officials
Distinguished guests
Members of the media
Ladies and gentlemen

We hosted a successful and prestigious 2010 FIFA World Cup in June and July and gained the relevant experience and lessons in traffic law enforcement and other law enforcement activities.

These lessons should be used to build on South Africa and the continent's reputation to enable us to aim higher on social and economic growth. During the world cup, we reduced lawlessness on our roads as we combated crime in various communities.

We indeed realised that frequent police visibility and patrols on our highways play a critical role in maintaining law and order.

From the world cup we learnt a few lessons:
• clear decisive leadership
• visibility of officers
• collaboration across sphere and with sister departments
• road safety is everybody's business; the community, the country, the continent and the world.

In this regard, on Friday last week we launched the new national traffic law enforcement plan when we hosted the National Traffic Safety Summit in Boksburg. In the same week, last Wednesday (8 September), 21 people were killed in three separate minibus taxi road crashes. We convey our condolences to the families and friends of all those killed in these road crashes. We also wish the injured a speedy recovery. We share with these families their pain and agony.

Road safety: a global perspective

Ladies and gentlemen, I must stress that road safety is not confined to South Africa alone. It is an international concern. Approximately 1.3 million people die each year on the world's roads and between 20 and 50 million sustain non-fatal injuries. The Global Status Report on Road Safety in Africa indicates that 62 percent of the reported road crashes occur in 10 countries. South Africa is unfortunately one of them.
In 2007, ministers responsible for transport and health in Africa endorsed the call for international dialogue on this matter. At this session, African Ministers recalled a United Nations resolution which endorsed the World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention.

The ministers also recalled the United Nations resolution, which recognises the need for continuous awareness raising on road safety. The African Ministers called upon the G8 Summit, held in Germany in June 2007, to recognise the urgent need to improve road safety in Africa, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As part of this growing movement, African countries, including ourselves, were at the first ever global United Nations Ministerial Conference on Road Safety that was held in Moscow last November. In Moscow, ministers deliberated on how best to develop road safety national plans and targets and how to implement over a decade, safe roads globally. In addition, ministers approved the Moscow declaration, which calls for a Decade of Action for Road Safety, 2010 to 2020.

This historic conference also agreed to hold a follow up ministerial conference in five years to review progress. In Moscow, on behalf of South Africa, we called for a global partnership against road deaths and for safety on our roads. After Moscow road safety has become a matter of urgency for countries and continents. The whole world now has a case in point to prove, its either we act or lose out on economic growth and saving lives.

A call to make roads safe: the ‘Make Roads Safe’ campaign

The United Nations has proclaimed the period 2010 to 2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety with a goal to stabilise and then reduce the global forecast levels of road traffic fatalities by increasing activities conducted at national levels. The G20 and the World Bank have endorsed the decade of action.

A number of states co-supported the United Nations resolution of establishing the decade of action committing to work towards achieving this ambitious objective. Subsequently, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in March this year proclaimed that 2010 to 2020 will be the Decade of Action for Road Safety under the theme of: “Make Roads Safe” recognising the tremendous global burden of fatalities and injuries resulting from road crashes each year.

The South African context

As we launch the first Road Safety Council in this province, we take note of the following challenges:
• vehicle crashes cost the South African economy more than R56 billion a year
• road injuries create socio-economic costs for victims and their families and are a burden on public health services
• traffic deaths and injuries undermine the millennium development goals of halving poverty and creating jobs
• halving of road fatalities by 2014
• implementation of low cost engineering at hazardous locations with the highest possible impact
• heavy, visible identification and prosecution of repeat offenders.
The Eastern Cape perspective

- In December 2009, 10 road accidents claimed 38 lives in the Engcobo area alone
- From 1 January 2010 to date, road accidents have claimed more than 11 lives in the same area
- Most of the accidents involved long distance public transport vehicles that transportation of people to and from Gauteng and Western Cape provinces.

The following positive developments in this province should enable the safer transportation of our people and contribute to a better life for all in the Eastern Cape and the rest of the country:

- The provincial Department of Transport should meet its commitment of spending R1.97 billion a year on routine road maintenance of 42 000 kilometres (km) of provincial roads
- The province should improve and increase the capacity on law enforcement through its allocated budget of R398 million
- It should intensify the provincial Rural Access Transport programme
- It should be able to provide concrete, short, medium and long term strategies to build an accessible and sustainable rural transport network in support of the provincial growth and development plan
- It should upgrade and construct roads that lead to schools, clinics, hospitals, tourism destinations and other economic activities.

These projects and programmes are guided by the principles of the expanded public works programme as it advocates the empowerment and development of rural communities through the creation of sustainable infrastructural services and facilities. The creation of jobs, training and skills development of local communities are key economic activities of the programme.

Government has committed billions on road network infrastructure development so that our public transport services should transport people safely. But we cannot tolerate bad driver attitudes that do not respect traffic laws and the infrastructure in place when transporting people.

As already indicated, accidents cannot be resolved by the state and its agencies at various levels of government acting alone and not in concert with road user communities.

Road accidents are the business of all of us. Road safety is not what one does to a community; road safety is what one does together with the community!

We are therefore pleased that the Eastern Cape has become part of our new initiative of starting road safety councils to enable the collaboration nationally. KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces have already launched Road Safety Councils. Road Safety Councils will be set up in all provinces.

New national traffic enforcement plan

As a country we have an obligation to ensure that the new national traffic enforcement plan works to its maximum by implementing all the action plans that are encompassed in it. The key elements of the new national rolling enforcement plan (NREP) are the following:

- As part of the new national rolling enforcement plan: From October 2010 to October 2011 we will stop and check no less than one million vehicles a month!
• Administrative Adjudication of Road Traffic Offences (AARTO): we will introduce the point's demerit system
• Skilling and re-skilling of drivers: better drivers on our roads
• Community road safety councils: road safety is every body's business
• Post-accident support through Road Accident Fund (RAF)
• The national rolling enforcement plan is part of the legacy which will be in support of the United Nations Make Roads Safer campaign
• The NREP was developed in consultation with all relevant authorities and stakeholders to ensure a month to month seamless campaign that focuses on various driver and vehicle fitness issues
• Through the NREP we hope to have a unified, consistent and harmonised approach to traffic law enforcement which will make an impact on offences and crashes
• To make this plan work, we need the commitment of every traffic chief in the country.

We are one country and our success depends on the contribution of every dedicated and loyal road safety practitioner out there. It is hoped that authorities will adapt, integrate and adopt this plan together with their individual plans in order to separate local and regional issues and harmonise with national prerogatives. Thus we need to think locally and act globally.

This plan is not meant to substitute individual master plans, rather, to compliment them with a view to harmonise road traffic operations for maximum impact. Underscoring this plan is the target to stop and check a minimum of one million vehicles, through one thousand roadside check points, nationwide, per month.

The support of the various political principles at local, provincial and national levels must be sought to add weight to and generate exposure for the programme.

Additional support of, especially, the South African Police Services (SAPS) and other relevant stakeholders such as Justice, Defence, Education and Health will be secured at various tiers in order to realise our objectives.

The standard reporting formats will be used by all authorities as agreed upon by all members. All traffic offences will be targeted. There will be no selective enforcement at the exclusion of any offence.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, we all need to pool our resources together nationally, provincially and at municipal level for us to win the war against road traffic crashes and deaths.

Let us work together, faster, smarter and efficiently as we strive to make our roads safe and save the precious lives of all of our people. We owe it to ourselves, our country, continent and the world.

I thank you.