

**SPEECH BY LIMPOPO MEC FOR EDUCATION ISHMAEL
KGETJEPE AT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK, MATSEPE
PRIMARY SCHOOL, TAFELKOP, 02 AUGUST 2018**

Programme director

The Red Pencil leadership

District director

Circuit Managers

Principals of schools

Exhibitors

Learners

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning,

It is my great pleasure and privilege to join you all at this 2018 National Science Week which has been underway since Monday. It is a special gathering in the sense that it is taking place in the centenary celebration year of our struggle icons Tata Nelson Mandela and Mama Albertina Sisulu. These icons were avid believers that education has the ability to open doors of opportunities and can empower all South Africans, especially the youth. The democracy we are enjoying today came about because of the sacrifices of these stalwarts among others and this year's theme for the National Science requires us to "**Deepen our Democracy through Science**" in celebration of the centenary

and the legacy of Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu. We appreciate this celebration of science with the primary goal of contributing to the development of a society that should be knowledgeable about science, technology and innovation. It is initiatives like this that often reminds us of words of wisdom from one of our greatest statesmen, the iconic Nelson Mandela. In his autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom, the late President, Nelson Mandela said: **“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation”**.

Our country is richly endowed with a wealth of natural resources. We need to have an ample reservoir of manpower that is capable of exploiting these resources. I am certain that the full and wise employment of these resources and manpower will bring to us the blessings of abundance and prosperity. It is in this regard, that we need adequate interest from each and every learner on matters of science, technology and innovation. Our view is that for the youth of today to become the scientists of tomorrow, they must know about the various careers that are available in the world of science, engineering, technology and innovation. So we are happy that the Red Pencil Group has hosted this Science Week, which is another platform, among the many platforms, to exhibit and increase awareness to our schools to various Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics career opportunities. We express our profound appreciation and acknowledgement of the work that you have been doing for the past days, to give resonance and meaning to President Mandela’s words of wisdom.

We all agree with this assertion and that is why we are here, that education can provide our next generation with multiple career pathways to succeed in life. We are also delighted to see so much enthusiasm among our learners and you must carry the same zeal and zest when you return to your respective schools. This is the start to equipping you to become the new generation of talented and ambitious young South Africans with the skills and knowledge in order for you to formulate and implement solutions for our challenges. Very few of you would disagree that the future prosperity of any country, depends on the talents, skills and creativity of its people. Our society is changing every day, every minute and every second and we must accordingly prepare learners to be relevant in what they pursue as careers in the light of the changing world. Mathematics and Science are prerequisites in this regard and this subject combination happen to touch every part of our lives.

Our challenge is to build up the best trained workforce that can rise to intense competition from around the world and such work starts by hosting career expos such as the one our learners have happily participated in. This is in line with the action oriented National Youth Policy 2020, adopted by Government in 2015, that through this policy, government, the private sector, labour, youth organization and civil society must collaborate so that our youth may reach their potential in whatever they aspire to be. On the other hand, the National Development Plan, our blueprint vision 2030, identifies the important role of science, technology and innovation in achieving the country's long term vision.

We recognize that it takes hard work and collaboration to steer learners toward interest in Science and Technology but we

believe that we are on the right track and we will reap important dividends. We owe it to this generation, to prepare it for an exciting and adventurous future and Mathematics and Science, is one of the tools that will see young people occupying professions that will indeed move South Africa forward. We know of the dire shortages of geologists, electrical, civil, mechanical, industrial and chemical engineers, not to mention unfilled vacancies for surveyors, artisans, project managers and many other related career opportunities.

Your continued efforts to invest in young people is indeed an indication that as a company born in the new South Africa, you have a long term vision for the future and this science week will help our learners discover themselves as they interacted with professionals on many career opportunities within the world of science and technology.

It is in this regard that we have as a Department gone on a drive to advise our schools all over the Province about subject combinations that lead to possible careers in Maths and Science. We have developed and supplied to schools documents indicating subject combinations together with university degrees and ultimately careers in these fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Our schools have been supplied with posters on bursaries and careers in Science and are further encouraged to arrange and take learners to universities during open day ceremonies, National Science and Mathematics Week, where they are exposed to expert advice on careers in Science.

The Department engages learners in Expos for Young Scientists, Mathematics and National Olympiads. Our partnership with the Department of Mineral Resources also assists our learners with

regards to careers in mining as learners participate in Learners Focus Week in which science activities are explored. The Talent Development Programme by the University of Stellenbosch assists our learners in Mathematics and Science.

Furthermore, Statistics South Africa, Department of Science and Technology, AMESA, University of Limpopo – Science Education Centre, are all on board to instill more interest in learners and raise their awareness about the growing occupations related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Learners from the most rural schools in the province, who are performing well in Mathematics and Science, have their talents developed further through the Targeting Talent Programme run by Wits University. In this programme, learners attend at the university, content based sessions in these subjects during June and September school recess and are given an opportunity of experiencing university as early as grade 10 until grade 12, which provides an advantage for university readiness. All these collaborative efforts are aimed at steering the interest of learners towards Maths, Science and Technology, so that they take up careers that will move South Africa forward in terms of development.

As I conclude, let our learners make use of these opportunities to their benefit and this Science Week is of great importance to us because it strengthens our career guidance that we provide in schools. We admit that to prepare our young people to meet the challenges and opportunities in a knowledge based economy, we cannot work alone in guiding and grooming the talents for the future of this province.

As you go back to your schools, please work very hard because it takes hard work to succeed. We hope you have enjoyed every single activity that you engaged yourselves in and it is only out of participation that you develop interest. We wish you all the very best in your studies.

Together we move South Africa Forward!

I thank you for your attention!