

Welcome speech by Cllr Ntando Khuzwayo at Leaners Focus Week Dinner Awards held at Durban City Hall, 13 July 2013

Programme Director, Mr Mbele,

Honourable Deputy Minister of Energy, Ambassador Thembi Majola,

Honourable MEC for Education, Mr Khethomthandayo Dlungwane,

Dean for School of Education at DUT, Prof Thabo Msibi,

Leaners,

Teachers and school governing bodies,

Parents,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sanibonani, this event takes place as we approach the International Mandela day which is held on his birthday. Our duty is to celebrate the legacy of our former President Mandela and icon for our liberation as oppressed people. We must use this year to remember where we come from as a nation; secondly how we achieve democracy and lastly, remind each other where we are heading.

This year South Africa will mark the centenary of the life our nation's founding father Nelson Mandela under the theme: ***"Be the legacy"***. The celebration is a major milestone in the incredible story of Nelson Mandela and our nation's journey.

Under the presidency of Nelson Mandela South Africa became a beacon of freedom and democracy. Today we continue to be guided by these values and ideals and during Freedom Month we get an opportunity to

reflect on the progress made in ensuring an inclusive, transformed and free and democratic South Africa.

We come from oppression and dispossession, where our heritage, wealth and land was brutally taken away from our people. Our values of Ubuntu and communal unity were also taken away. We lost our language, our culture, our animals and families. In remembering Madiba, we must entrench values of Ubuntu and encourage you to speak our indigenous language.

We need to reach a level whereby universities are teaching in isiZulu or seTsonga like we have with Afrikaans. Our children must be taught maths, science and technology in their mother tongue. I note the University of KwaZulu-Natal maybe implementing IsiZulu to be one of the compulsory languages within their curriculum.

Children whose primary language is not the language of instruction in school are more likely to drop out of school or fail in early grades. A Research that was conducted by UNESCO has shown that children's first language is the optimal language for literacy and learning throughout primary school. If we teach in our mother tongue, children are more likely to enrol and succeed in school.

Programme Director,

Where come from, education was used to produce workers and servants. We have an opportunity to use education to produce independent thinkers and people who will lead in innovation space.

Science and technology are the driving force in enhancing productivity, economic growth and socio-economic development. Our National Development Plan (NDP) has identified science, technology and innovation as a crucial weapon in the arsenal to free South Africans from poverty, underdevelopment and unemployment.

The city of Durban has invested lot of funding and time in the last six years working closely with the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. Most of the work has been based on developing technologies and tools to deal with the issue of climate change and other various socio-economic issues. To date I'm proud to announce that we have produced at least **4 PhDs** and **14 Masters Degrees** and **60%** of these students are **Females**.

I'm happy to learn that the BRICS program has been extended to other local tertiary institutions, like DUT, UNIZULU, and MANGOSUTHU.

Our generational mission is to reverse that and ensure that more African people are leading in the field of maths and science.

We must ensure that we advance in the field of water, energy and ICT. In the past, Africans, especially women, were only limited to collectors of water and wood.

We didn't know that there was water engineering and science. We collected wood, we didn't know that we can enter into energy sector and start providing electricity and become professionals.

Africa's potential is constrained by a lack of infrastructure; particularly energy infrastructure. Energy is the driver for social and economic development enabling education, healthcare, economic and commercial enterprise and social wellbeing.

Energy impacts on the life of every person and every person can impact on the availability of affordable and reliable energy for this continent. Africa needs your knowledge and skill whatever it is [financial, legal, educational, technical, social] to develop the energy sector and unleash the potential of our continent.

I thank you and wish you well!