

Remarks by Eastern Cape MEC for Finance, Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Hon. Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane at the Provincial Environmental Awards held on 13 September 2018, in Mbizana.

Executive Mayor of the Alfred Nzo District Municipality

Mayor of Mbizana Local Municipality

Our Esteemed Traditional Leaders

Government Officials Present

Teachers,

Learners

Molweni, good morning, goeie more. Yinyanga yamaGugu lena sikuyo kwaye apha eMzantsi Afrika sinelwimi ezisemthethweni ezilishumi elinanye. Kuyafuneka sizame ukuzifunda zonke ingakumbi nina bantwana besikolo inganivulela amathuba angumangaliso lonto.

I greet you all with great appreciation of your determination to continue with the excellent work of protecting our environment in fulfilment of our Constitutional obligation of ensuring a safe and healthy environment.

I am sure you would agree with me that as humankind we are at war with the environment. That war comes in many forms; some amongst are guilty of polluting the environment every day by throwing away waste such as plastics which end up in our rivers and oceans. Some amongst are depleting precious resources such as water and minerals while others are targeting our wildlife species such as rhinos for selfish reasons. When we

do all of what I have just mentioned, we are without a doubt degrading the environment and hence at war with it.

The results of what we are doing to the environment are dire and are coming back to bite us. The drought that recently hit our country in the past few years comes to mind as it not only affected the agricultural sector but threatened job and food security in our country.

In other parts of the world communities are in constant danger of rising sea levels, devastating hurricanes due to ever changing and unpredictable weather patterns. On the other hand, our communities are growing in what is known as waste material which comes from both domestic and industrial use. Many of these waste materials such as plastic find their way in the stomach of livestock and in our oceans where they become a death trap for marine species.

All of these should serve as a wakeup call to humanity to find better ways of treating the environment so that it can take good care of us.

When a war is waged, you need capable soldiers to fight that war. We thus devised this Provincial Environmental Awards Competition in 2011 as a strategy to use active learning approaches to recruit activists for environmental protection. We believe that through our learners, we have capable soldiers through which we can win the war against environmental degradation.

More than that our learners are the future of this country and they must add their voice in the environmental debate. As you would know, old aged world leaders such as the President of the United State of America Donald Trump are dedicating their energies to counter laws that are designed to protect our environment. The sad reality is that they will not be here 30 years from now, but want to take decisions that will have serious repercussions for future generations.

As you would know I am new in this Portfolio so I asked my staff what this competition is about and what are the prizes for the schools. They explained that it takes the form of the performing arts and that all the participants do not go home empty handed. I then said I cannot miss this competition. **Ndivuyela lento sizama ukubagoba besebatsha abantwana bethu ukuze ibesegazini beselula lento yolondolozo lwendalo. Thina sikhule sizigela kwanto eshukumayo ehlathini yaye sigawula kwamthi esiwubonayo. Amehlo avuleka ngoku sesibadala, sewuminzi umonakalo esiwenzileyo ekukhuleni.**

As a learning nation we are now making sure that our children do not repeat the same mistakes we made. Many people might view this as just a competition but this initiative could be a career defining moment for some of these children. I am sure many of them would pursue careers in environmental studies when they pass their matric, something many of us were never exposed to growing up. I would like to urge the Department to hold on to this Provincial Environmental Awards Competition for dear life.

Ndiyayazi ukuba siyathanda ubamba siyeka kwarhulumente kodwa lena yenye yezinto ekufuneka siqhube nayo. Yaye kufuneka siqinisekise ukuba xa sikhupha inxaso mali yabo bafuna ukufundela ezendalo sijonga nakwezi zikolo sithabatha inxaxheba kweliphulo.

I am told that the themes for this year's competition are: **“Mother Earth, Save Her”** for Primary Schools and **“Waste to Worth, unlocking R11,5 Billion direct contributions to the GDP of South Africa”** for High Schools.

It is going to be interesting to see how you are going to deal with such complex matters and the ideas you are going to put forward. But I am quite certain that all of you have the capacity to present viable solutions on both themes.

With those few words I wish all the participants all the best in their presentations. I am here for the whole day I want you to Wow me with your presentations.

There is prize money to be won today to the value of **R355 000** and your school could walk away with a share of this prize money to initiate projects that address issues of environmental management. But by being here to represent your respective Districts, you are already winners. By participating in this agenda for environmental protection you are winners.

You must give yourselves a big round of applause for reaching this stage and without your participation and support we would not be hosting the 7th edition of this Competition this year. Let the games begin. **Amasi abekwe elangeni umphokoqo unexhala. Good luck to all of you.**

Ndiyabulela.