



**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, MS DIPUO PETERS, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE AFRO FLEET DRIVER TRAINING ACADEMY LAUNCH,
DURBAN, 17 DECEMBER 2015**

Programme Director;

MEC for Transport, Community Safety & Liaison in KZN, Mr Willies Mchunu;

The Mayor of Ethekwini Municipality, Cllr James Nxumalo;

Chief Executive Officers of RTMC, Adv. Msibi;

All transport sector stakeholders present;

Road safety activists;

Representatives of various community and faith based organisations;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Please allow me to take this compelling opportunity to welcome you all to what I consider to be a defining moment in the road safety fraternity. I am sincerely expressing my fullest confidence in the significance of today's gathering because we owe our convergence to the launch of Afro Fleet's Driver Training Academy which is duly anticipated to make an immense contribution to road safety through the upskilling of taxi, truck and bus drivers.

Programme Director,

I am always overcome with a deep sense of exasperation when I note that a vast majority of South African road users are oblivious to two noteworthy road fatality facts: 1. **95% of road crashes are preceded by a traffic law violation**; and 2. **Road crashes cost the South African economy in excess of R300 billion every year.**

Notwithstanding the human cost of losing our mothers, fathers, breadwinners, educators, upstanding citizens and children, road crashes are discernibly too much of a burden on our societies to ignore.

To this end, the Department of Transport has initiated a plethora of road safety programmes and initiatives to address the scourge of road crashes. Just to mention a few of them, they include the 365 Days Road Safety Campaign, the annual Road Safety Summit and the Road Safety Advisory Council which is under the auspices of the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC).

You would recall that during the launch of the 2013 campaign of the '365 Days of Road Safety' initiative, I made a battle cry for all road users and stakeholders to make meaningful contributions that will assist the Department in the battle against the menacing road crash statistics in South Africa. The theme of that particular campaign was entitled, "Together, Championing Road Safety for 356 Days".

The call for collaborative efforts between government, business and the general public was not at all misguided because through the 2015 Road Safety Summit deliberations, we re-affirmed our conviction that road safety is indeed a societal responsibility which places the onus on every road user to be mindful of their conduct when using the roads.

Moreover, it has favourably culminated, amongst other boons, in the launch of the Afro Fleet Driver Training Academy which will undoubtedly assist in the reduction of road fatalities, decreasing road crashes, changing road user behaviour, encouraging voluntary compliance to road traffic rules, and speeding up the implementation of good road practices which will make road safety part of everyday life.

Programme Director,

As road users, it is unequivocally crucial that we continue to work tirelessly as a unit to reverse the negative impact of road crashes. It is equally vital for all of us to note that we no longer refer to this tormentor as 'road accidents', but that the internationally accepted term is 'road crashes'. The purpose of this important paradigm shift is three-fold: 1. **to dispel the notion that road crashes are beyond our control as road users**, 2. **to encourage road users to take responsibility for their actions**, and 3. **to deter recalcitrant behaviour on the roads**.

Considering that the majority of road crashes are caused by human factors, this is indeed a critical and warranted paradigm shift. Furthermore, it is an indication that through responsible and prudent driving practices, road crashes can be reduced. It is, therefore, unacceptable that South Africa has one of the worst road safety records in the world with an average of 40 people dying and 20 left permanently injured on South African roads, daily.

With interventions such as the operation of the Afro-fleet motor vehicle simulator driving centre, we hope to make enormous inroads into correcting driver behaviour through rigorous training and road safety education. I would also imagine that the centre will also form as a road safety information hub which will sensitise it learners of the facts and figures pertaining to road safety. The theoretical aspect to the training must be prioritised as much as the practical in order to ensure an optimal learning experience.

I, therefore, wish to take this opportunity to commend the Afro Fleet for this stellar and pragmatic solution to reducing road crashes in our country. The academy's vision "**inspire the world by making South African roads the safest to drive and inculcate road safety as a personal responsibility of every season**" is consistent with the department and its entities' vision and multi-pronged approach to road safety.

It is encouraging to acknowledge that the academy's virtual simulator training targets a demographic that is most prone road crashes – taxi and truck drivers. Statistics show that light passenger vehicles and light delivery vehicles contribute the highest

number of fatal crashes on the roads. Light passenger vehicles account for 48% of fatal crashes followed by light delivery vehicles at 19%. Minibuses contribute 9.7%, buses 1.3% and trucks 1.7%.

Five major contributory factors to crashes have been identified as speeds that are too high for circumstance leading to loss of control and inability to avoid hazards. Secondly abuse of alcohol by both drivers and pedestrian, followed by dangerous overtaking i.e. overtaking in the face of oncoming traffic, vehicle fitness defective tyres, steering and brakes especially on public passenger and freight transport and pedestrian negligence namely jaywalking, walking on freeways, drinking and walking and failing to wear clothes.

Training at the academy will have to intensely focus on addressing the root causes of these harrowing statistics, by educating drivers and teaching them how to drive responsibly by instilling a culture of self-regulation. Although, as government, we continue to upsurge traffic officer presence on our roads, their supervision should not be the only reason road users obey the law. Self-regulation is of outmost importance when it comes to road safety and I believe that through the establishment of academies of this nature across the country, this feat can and will be achieved.

I think it is also important that MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Mr Willies Mchunu, for the wonderful work that he is doing in the Kwa-Zulu Natal Province with respect to road safety.

It was with an enormous amount of delight that I noted, on the 09th of December 2015, the MEC's announcement of a 26000 (twenty-six thousand)-plus strong multi-disciplinary law enforcement team to ensure people's safety in Kwa-Zulu for the festive season.

The launch of the Provincial Safety Plan began with a road block which screened motorists for licenses, vehicle roadworthiness, outstanding fines, had stopped more than 500 vehicles at the Mooi River Toll Plaza, where more than 1000 vehicles were recorded within the first of kick-off.

This safety plan is an excellent program which I believe should be replicated across all other South African Provinces if we are, as government; want to demonstrate our commitment to road safety.

Corrupt government officials who issue licenses to under-skilled drivers, and grant unwarranted road safety certificates for unsafe vehicles should face the full force of the South African law and be purged from the public service. The same goes for traffic law officers who take bribes from inebriated drivers. We cannot continue to allow your greed and callousness to cost our country so dearly. Enough is enough!

Ladies and gentlemen,

The ANC-led South African government has pledged to half the number of road traffic accidents by the 2020 under the ambit of the United Nations (UN) Decade Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 campaign.

This worldwide campaign was necessitated by the fact that road traffic injuries threaten to hinder achievements in economic and human development. It has been estimated that global losses due to road traffic injuries total \$518 billion and cost Governments between 1 and 3 per cent of their gross national product.

Thus, the urgent need for government's across the globe to address this issue has never been keener. Last month, an international High-Level Conference on Road Safety was held in Brazil in order to ascertain the progress being made all over the world in meeting the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety objectives.

Part of the resolutions and key lessons learnt with the South African Delegation participation in the 2nd Global Road Safety Summit held in Brasilia, November 18-19 included the following:

- Re-configuration and prioritisation of the road safety management. This also speaks to the need for establishment of a legislators' network ensuring a multi-faceted and evidence driven intervention to address key road safety challenges in the country.

- Diversification of the Traffic Policing mind-set to be more educational towards the road user whilst also utilising statistics and evidence to refocus strategies to address trending risk areas from time to time. It was eye-opening to learn from successful countries such as Brazil, Sweden and Australia, that for road traffic police to make an impact on road crashes, he/she need to educate the road user about the objectives behind their policing, thereby making users more cooperative and compliant.
- The drive towards implementing effective road safety policies was identified to be central in collaborations with multi-nationals, the corporate sector and civic society organisations. This is one of the key learnings the South African delegation picked from the Latin America and the Caribbean counterparts in road safety management. The drive towards policy reform and enhanced compliance in these countries has been achieved through civic society leadership and activism.

It is important that road safety policy formulation and implementation in our country is on par with international best practices. As a developing nation, there is a lot we can learn from our international counterparts, particularly as there are over 6 million more vehicles on our roads today than there were in 1994. Traffic looks set to continue growing – most of it on roads that are already operating at full capacity during busy periods such as the Easter, and Christmas holidays.

As such, I was happy to announce at the High-level conference in Brazil that South Africa's road safety machinery will be focusing on the following priorities:

- Youth activism in the promotion of road safety policies and enhanced compliance amongst the most vulnerable
- Enhance management of road safety for children ensuring continued emphasis on child-restraints and promotion of road safety for kids
- Continued support for Road Traffic Management Systems (RTMS) and the implementation of RTMS (SANS 1395) for ISO 39001, including a focus on Government Fleet, Public Transport and the Mines.

- Refocusing the road engineering, infrastructure development and the road safety strategy towards implementation of the “Safe Systems Approach”, a system more empathetic to eliminate mistakes that mankind is prone to commit and ensuring that the road infrastructure and the vehicles used amortise the extent of injury and prevent death in the event of an accident resulting from human errors.
- Multi-lateral agreements across all sectors and internationally to professionalise road safety through academic development programmes and twinning partnerships to ensure South Africa develops a cadreship of road safety managers to implement the sustainable development goals on road safety for the next decade and beyond.
- South Africa needs to vigorously rally the support and active participation of multi-national companies, business sector, civic society and NGOs to leverage on their tried and tested best practises in managing road safety for their companies, as well as attain resources to fund the country’s road safety agenda as a matter of priority.

To this extent, South Africa can export its best practises through the active involvement and participation of the Road Safety Advisory Council, the interfaith movement, youth and civic society organisations for attaining the policy priorities and goals on road safety.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Road safety statistics in the Ethekewini region constitute a daily crisis! 67000 accidents are recorded annually (187 per day), 22 000 casualties per year (61 per day), and 560 casualties per year (1.7 per day).

This underpins the importance of the Afro Fleet Driver Academy. I am assured by the event organisers that the academy is about changing the mind-set of the driver, and goes beyond the needs for a person to pass a test, but to ensure the safety of all road users. It is doubtless that the academy will help a lot in assisting the government with meeting resolutions made at the High-Level Conference and with meeting the objectives of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

This is very important for our country because losing R306 billion per year, directly and indirectly, as a result of road crashes only serves to undermine the key policy objectives of the National Development Plan which is designed to obliterate the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment by 2030. The economic cost of road crashes is an impediment to our development and growth as a nation. As the heartbeat of the South African economy, it is incumbent on the transport sector to address this issue holistically.

The Department of Transport's contribution to the NDP is predicated on the National Transport Master Plan (NATMAP) 2050 vision. Therefore, the department's key aim is to promote a safe, reliable, effective, efficient, coordinated, integrated and environmentally friendly public transport system by developing norms and standards as well as regulations and legislation to guide the development of public transport for rural and urban passengers.

I would therefore like to urge society at large to continue to cooperate with the Department and its agencies and to make meaningful contributions to helping the Department achieve its mandate. Future and current generations depend on it. The Afro Fleet academy is a good example of an active and caring citizenry which works hand-in-hand with the state to ensure sustainable development. We are a representative government which encourages public participation in governance as enshrined in the South African constitution of 1996. A true testament to South Africa's status as a developmental state and to why we are recognised as a gateway to Africa.

Specifically, I want to reiterate that active involvement across all sectors of society is needed in order to enhance road safety. Supporting this view is William H. Cameron's statement that **"we have unshakeable conviction that accident causes are man-made and that a man-made problem can be solved by men and women"**.

It's all in our hands as road-user to make a difference. We can make our roads safer, its that simple. Do not drink and drive, do not speed, do not text and drive, obey the rule of the road at all times! It is that simple.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to indicate that although prevention is better than cure, The Road Accident Benefit Scheme (RABS) Bill has been established to care for and assist those who have been involved in serious road crashes. RABS will provide pro-active assistance to crash victims and family members with emphasis on effective access to medical and vocational rehabilitation to improve victims' chances of re-entering the employment sphere and mainstream economy.

Programme Director,

Allow me to close by thanking the event organisers for this very important initiative and to express my hope that this project will be made available across the country. My highest gratitude is reserved for the KZN provincial government for hosting us. To all public service officials and stakeholders who have made this gathering the success that it is, ***siyabonga kakhulu, inkosi inibusise!***

The battle against road accidents is a long and hard one and the United Nations, and certainly all governments across the world cannot win this one alone - but together we can triumph. I conclude with this quote which we must all endeavour to adhere to from Mr Charles M. Hayes: "**Safety first, is safety always**".

I THANK YOU!!