

OPENING REMARKS BY DEPUTY PRESIDENT DAVID MABUZA ON THE OCASSION OF HIS COVID-19 OVERISGHT VISIT TO THE FREE STATE PROVINCE

05 June 2020

Programme Director,
Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla,
Premier Sisi Ntombela and MECs Present,
Members of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders,
Mayors of the Free State Municipalities,
Vice Chancellors,
The Director-General of the Province and Heads of Departments,
Distinguished Guests, and
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Dumelang! Sanibonani! Goeie More! Good morning!

We thank you for the warm words of welcome and the speed in which you responded to our request to you to prepare for this visit.

We are here on behalf of President Cyril Ramaphosa and the entirety of the National Coronavirus Command Council, to assess the provincial response plan of Free State in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. As a country, we are all called upon to flatten the curve and save lives.

The whole world is in a crisis of great proportions, where hundreds of thousands of lives have already been lost to the coronavirus pandemic. The world as we have known it has changed in a manner unimagined.

Fear and uncertainty has become part of our daily lives. People have lost their loved ones. Some did not get even an opportunity to bid their loved ones farewell. Unfortunately this was necessitated by conditions of history.

Government had to take tough decisions to flatten the curve of infections, and to save more lives as we prepare ourselves for possible tough times ahead. In the midst of all that, we remain hopeful that we will emerge out of these uncertain times.

We have a plan.

We have the right leadership to steer us through these uncharted waters. When the pandemic reached our shores, our government made what is clearly a right call to initiate a lockdown and to establish a national response structure.

As we have entered the Alert Level 3 that phases-in the resumption of economic activity, as the NCCC we have decided to embark on a proactive approach of ensuring that all parts of the country have effective measures to be able to contain new infections.

It has become clear to us, that success factors to an effective containment strategy across all provinces, have largely been as a result of implementing screening and testing at a large scale, having active surveillance measures, and driving behavioural change.

Honourable Premier,

Let me then take this opportunity to appreciate the work and contribution of the Free State Province in combatting the spread of coronavirus pandemic. Under your leadership, this province has screened 61 percent of its population, and has contact tracing levels of about 99 percent.

This is commendable especially since the easing of restrictions.

As people return to their workplaces, as students return to school, and as travel restrictions are relaxed, we must maintain our discipline so that new infections are averted. Free State should expand its efforts to ensure that it utilises all the elements of what we have called the Coronavirus Prevention Toolbox.

Whilst, the task before us is momentous, as a country we have made notable progress in overcoming other health challenges through programmes such as the Checka Impilo campaign.

The lessons already learnt with this campaign, are invaluable in dealing with this pandemic.

One of our key responsibilities is fighting stigma as we tackle this pandemic - for stigma perpetuates discrimination. It discourages those infected by Covid-19 to seek medical attention, thereby undermining our efforts of defeating this pandemic.

We all have a responsibility to take charge and play an active role in combating the spread and transmission of this virus, as we have done in the past when faced with similar challenges such as HIV and TB epidemics.

In the same trying times, let us heed the call by President Ramaphosa to be responsible citizens.

The power to defeat the coronavirus resides within all of us. As national government, we have confidence in your efforts to curb further the spread of Covid-19.

I thank you.