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**Media Advisory
To ALL Media:**

DIGITAL FREE STATE ON THE HORIZON

“The basic focus of Operation Hlasela is to embark on targeted interventions to achieve maximum impacts in line with the movement’s vision of the attainment of a National Democratic Society (NDS)”, Premier Ace Magashule.

True to the aspirations of the Freedom Charter, which boldly proclaims that *“Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit”*, Premier Ace Magashule successfully pioneered the training of 103 young people from the Free State on Information Technology (IT) skills in the city of Hyderabad, India.

The Free State Executive Council recognised the catalytic role played by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector in the development of society. This was further echoed by the inaugural Free State ICT Summit that unanimously resolved to set the Free State province an aggressively digital literacy programme.

The training programme was facilitated through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Tech Mahindra, an Indian multinational company with a market capitalisation of over R16 billion, 105,000+ employees across 51 countries. Tech Mahindra is a specialist in digital transformation, consulting and business re-engineering solutions. India is considered a pioneer in software development and a preferred destination for IT-enabled services, with the world’s fastest growing ICT sector that has created millions of jobs.

Tech Mahindra proved to be the perfect destination for the training of young people in IT Infrastructure Management and Software Development. The training took place over a period six months, with the Infrastructure Management programme starting in June 2015 and the Software Development programme starting in July 2015. The trainees were selected from all five districts of Province, with 78% having previously obtained an undergraduate qualification in Information Technology and 75% being unemployed. The ultimate aim is to ensure that critical IT skills are proliferated throughout the municipalities to ensure the digital transformation is championed across all strata of society.

The Free State Province is embarking on an ambitious “Digital Free State” Programme which aims to transform the Free State into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The Digital Free State Programme is coordinated by the Provincial Government Information Technology Officers’ Council (PGITOC) in partnership with various captains of the ICT industry. The focus is on making technology central in the enablement of socio-economic change, including enhancing service delivery through e-Government initiatives; rolling out Digital Literacy programmes, particularly in under developed communities and ensuring universal access to high-speed internet

connectivity by all citizens of the Province. The graduation of these trainees is a milestone in the Digital Free State programme. Through other training interventions, the Province wishes to extend this training to 2000 other citizens of the Province.

Advancing Service Delivery Through ICT!

Rea Hlasela!

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