



Speech by Minister of Defence and Military Veterans on occasion of signing of memorandum of Understanding with the North West Provincial Government at Mahikeng, 27 August 2015

Date: Thursday, August 27, 2015

Program Director
Premier of the North West, Supra Mahomapelo
Members of the Provincial Executive Council
Secretary for Defence, Dr Sam Gulube
Chief of the South African National Defence Force
Friends, comrades, fellow South Africans

We meet here today to perform a function that redefines the role of our military and its inherent potential to support development through its peace time activities.

Since the integration of the various former statutory and non-statutory forces into a single National Defence Force, we have made various strides in shaping the mandate of the SANDF under a democratic dispensation.

In terms of both the 1996 and 2014 Defence Reviews, it is clear that both in its core and support roles, the mandate of the SANDF should be encored on the promotion of South Africa's national interest, including supporting development objectives.

The launching of this partnership today edges into this direction and constitute a bold move on the part of the leadership of the SANDF, under the command of the General Solly Shoke, the Chief of the SANDF.

Honourable Premier, today I am glad that this work has reached this culmination. The launch marks the culmination of a process of engagement between your government and the Department of Defence to forge a partnership to advance the national strategic imperative of rural development.

Through the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) officially commits to work with your government and other stakeholders in this province to embark on a multi-faceted programme to develop rural areas where the lives of the majority of people are blighted by grinding poverty and

underdevelopment. The MoU also constitutes a broad partnership that transcends government, and commits the North West University (NWU) and North West Cooperative (NWK) to a collaborative effort to develop rural areas to change the lives of our people for the better.

From the onset I need for both the SANDF and the Provincial partners to appreciate the mammoth task we are taking on.

Rural development is a vast subject that encompasses all aspects of rural living, impacting on the quality of life of the people. This may cover agriculture, livestock, infrastructural development, health, sanitation, energy and education. This list is by no means exhaustive. The National Development Plan recognizes the enormity of the scope of work to be undertaken to develop rural areas where it says:

“Rural economies will be activated through improved infrastructure and service delivery; a review of land tenure; a review of tenure security for communal farmers especially women; service to small and micro farmers; and a review of mining industry commitments to social investment and tourist investment.”

In the same vein, we should also bear in mind that the constituency we are dealing with has been historically disaffected and is justified to be impatient in their expectations for qualitative intervention in their lives.

A multi-disciplinary approach is therefore required if we are to fundamentally develop rural areas and raise living standards to levels enjoyed in our urban and peri-urban centres. This is by no means a small task and it compels us to work together in a coherent and structured manner.

It is therefore important that this work is located within the planning cycle of government to ensure structured coordination, planning and accountability for deliverables.

There's a need that both our own policy and planning instruments should be aligned to include our targets for the work envisaged in the MoU.

For the SANDF, the Defence Review 2014 is now the government's official policy blueprint on defence. It clearly directs that the defence force be mandated to execute developmental and other tasks assigned to it by the National Executive Authority. One of these tasks is to contribute to the economic development of the country and to the well-being of its people.

Outcome 7 of the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) of the Government envisages vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities that enjoy food security. The NDP aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. This is an ambitious target indeed. Sceptics have already dismissed it as unrealistic.

Of course as government we are fully aware that the sceptics should be proved wrong, for our people cannot afford for this program to fail. In fact given this scepticism, those of us who

are in government should double our efforts that this work is done properly and measured for its successes.

Comrade Premier, I have approved a concept whereby the defence force will use the presence of its units throughout the country; its ownership of land; and the assets and resources at its disposal to stimulate local economic activity. There is a conscious intent to focus on rural areas where the need is greatest.

A decision brief has been signed by the Chief of the SANDF to initiate a pilot project here in North West province along the following guidelines:

- That its contribution to rural development must not be restricted to the agricultural sector but be broadened to include industrial and service sectors as well as human resource development with emphasis on Youths, Military Veterans and Women
- That its developmental contribution should be linked to the infrastructure development of government
- That a project director be appointed to lead a team with a clear mandate to enrich the concept as presented
- That the SA Army be appointed as the lead service in the implementation of the project
- That the Army proceed with the implementation of a pilot project in the North West Province and the subsequent roll out to other provinces

There are a number of practical ways in which the defence force in partnership with provincial and local authorities can intervene meaningfully to develop rural areas and improve the lives of its people. The presence of military units in the midst of rural communities is potentially beneficial in many ways that include:

- Generation of job opportunities and enhancement of economic profile of local communities
- Increased business activity as a result local procurement of goods and services. In this regard Premier we have a breakdown of monthly expenditure by our units in your province which will stimulate local economies once a decentralized procurement policy is in place
- Sourcing of local labor for developmental projects
- The building and repair of infrastructure- bridges, roads etc
- Provision of training and skills development
- Provision of health services where required
- Recruitment and utilization of Reserves from local communities

- The use of underutilized SANDF land to support specific projects
- Support for government's National Rural Youth Service Corps to develop skills and create employment

Of course we are all mindful of the fact that our work must fall within the framework of the national government's Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy. This means we must work in conjunction with relevant government departments and agencies such as the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Department of Rural Development and Land Reform; National Treasury; Provincial Governments; and Provincial Treasuries. Our work should complement that being undertaken by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform as endorsed by the 2015 Cabinet Makgotla on the growth of the South African economy.

The MOU that we sign today should not gather dust in our offices. It should be a living document that drives our work and commits us to deliver concrete results that create material conditions for the upliftment of our people in rural areas. We will demand total accountability from officials on both sides entrusted with this extremely important project.

The MOU calls for the creation of a Provincial Project Steering Committee to oversee the work of implementing agents appointed by the provincial government and SANDF.

This Committee will monitor milestones and deliverables in accordance with the MOU. It will meet quarterly to facilitate and review the implementation of the MOU; oversee the management and achievements of its operational aspects; and report and analyse progress of the cooperation between the two parties' implementation agents.

Comrade Premier my Department is aware of the sterling work your government is already doing to develop rural areas around the province.

The work that we shall do together should complement what is already being done and build on it. We welcome the NWU as an important partner who will assist in the monitor and evaluation of the project; the training of farmers, drawing up of business plans; and in research and development. We also look forward to working with the North West Cooperatives who I understand will render technical assistance for farm management, effect technology transfer and finance production inputs for emerging farmers,

It is our intention to implement this pilot project in the FY 2016/17. The period preceding that will be utilized to develop a strategy that is fully aligned with the Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy of government. The Department of Defence looks forward to working with the North West provincial government on a project that should significantly contribute to the overarching policy objective of government, to give a better life to all South Africans.

In closing, let me indicate that we cannot emphasise enough that all of us should guard against the possibility of undermining the enormity of the task before us. Our people have no

patience left for another failure and lip service paid to delivery of services. In this regard, I call on all of you, leadership, managers, officials and community members, to lend your shoulder to the wheel. If every generation has its given task, then this one is clearly ours. We dare not fail.

I thank you

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