

**REMARKS DELIVERED BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC
FOR EDUCATION, MS MBALI FRAZER, DURING THE 2023
NATIONAL EXAM PRAYER AND PLEDGE SIGNING
CEREMONY HELD AT FERRUM HIGH SCHOOL, IN
NEWCASTLE ON 20 OCTOBER 2023**

Sanibonani,

We have gathered here today with a shared purpose, a common goal, and a solemn commitment.

We stand united, resolute, and unwavering in our resolve to protect the credibility and integrity of the upcoming 2023 Matric exams.

We are also here to offer our collective prayers for a successful and peaceful examination period.

However, as we pray for our learners and a peaceful examination period, I ask that we also take this moment to pray for the safety and well-being of the tens of thousands of Palestinians who are trapped in yet another devastating wave of violence in the Middle East. We must never forget the words of uTata Nelson Mandela, who urged us to remain steadfast in our support for and solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Now, getting back to the business of the day, ladies and gentlemen, as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, we

are well prepared to administer the 2023 National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examinations. We will ensure that the 193 779 full and part-time candidates who will sit for their first paper in less than nine days do so in an environment of trust, fairness, and equality.

Working with all our stakeholders, we will stop at nothing to prevent all forms of irregularities, including ensuring that exam papers and answer sheets are not leaked. Systems are also in place to ensure that even in the midst of storms, those exam materials will be delivered to every examination centre on time.

Honourable Deputy Minister, as the examination system is the biggest in the country, KwaZulu-Natal has trained 6 710 invigilators to manage the examination sessions in 6 343 examination rooms across the province.

Programme Director, before I continue, I want to take a moment to express our profound gratitude to the dedicated educators who have been the architects of our learners' journey through the education system since they entered the foundation phase. You, bothisha bethu esibathanda kakhulu, have diligently imparted knowledge and guided our young minds, and for that, we salute you. I must also make a humble appeal for your

patience as you prepare the class of 2023 for their final assessments before they exit the schooling system.

To our dear learners, I understand the immense pressure you are under. The weight of expectations, the anxiety, and the anticipation of the unknown can be overwhelming. But remember, you are not alone in this journey. We, your parents, your teachers, and your community are here to support you every step of the way. However, amidst this pressure, there may be a temptation to take shortcuts, to resort to unethical means to achieve success. I implore you, do not fall into that trap. Ngiyanicela ningaze nilenze lelophutha.

The consequences of cheating in any exam can be life-altering and haunt you for years to come. If you are found guilty, you could be disbarred from writing matric exams for several years or made to rewrite all the papers. This path can lead to even greater stress and heartache. I urge you, do not bring unauthorised materials into examination centres, and do not turn a blind eye to dishonest conduct. Report it to the invigilators or your educators.

To the parents and guardians, I appeal to you for your unwavering support during this critical period. Please encourage your children and provide them with the environment they need to focus on their studies. I also request that learners be excused from some of the household chores to ensure they have the time and peace of mind they need to focus on their studies. Ngiyabacelela nje okwalesikhashana kodwa bazobuye baqhubeke ukuyenza imisebenzi yasekhaya uma sebeqedile ukubhala.

Honourable Deputy Minister, our target as KwaZulu-Natal is to achieve a 100% pass rate this year. But if, for some reason, we fall short of that mark, we will not settle for less than 85%, and it must be 85% of quality passes. I'm sure HOD and the DDGs will agree with me that these are not unrealistic targets because all the stakeholders – from the learners themselves to educators and officials – have invested their hard work, dedication, and commitment to achieving this goal.

Programme Director, I now wish to make a special plea to the people of KwaZulu-Natal to help the Department by ensuring that the schools in their areas are not disrupted by any form of turmoil during the examinations. Ngiyacela ningayivali nemigwaqo eseduze nezikole uma kuneziteleka.

I also make a special request to the religious communities across the province. I ask that you set aside time for prayer for the protection and success of our learners and educators.

Our churches, temples, and places of worship are sanctuaries of hope, and your prayers can create a shield of strength around our learners. Umkhuleko unendawo enkulo oyidlala ezimpilwenu zethu ngakho ngiyaninxusa ukuba nibabeke abafundi nothisha bethu ngazo zonke izikhathi uma nikhuleka.

As we commit to the safeguarding of the credibility and integrity of the 2023 exams, let us also pledge our unwavering support and fervent prayers for our learners' success.

On behalf of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, I wish the Class of 2023 and all our learners across the province the best of luck in the upcoming year-end assessments.

With those words, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour ukunethulela uqweqwe lukathisha – a distinguished leader in the education sector and unionist.

She possesses a Secondary Teacher's Diploma, an additional Diploma in Education, a Bachelor of Arts degree, an Honours Bachelor of Education degree, a Master's in Public Administration, and a Doctorate in Public Administration.

Starting her career as an educator back in 1980, she dedicated a remarkable 20 years of her life to this noble profession.

She has served the ANC across various portfolios, including chairing subcommittees and clusters. Presently, she is a member of the ANC's National Executive Committee.

In the year 2000, she assumed the role of Council Speaker at Mbombela Local Municipality, a position she held until 2003 when she took on the esteemed position of Executive Mayor within the same municipality.

In 2006, she assumed the responsibilities of Senior Manager of Transport Administration and Licensing at the Mpumalanga Provincial Government Department of Roads and Transport.

The year 2009 saw her appointment as the MEC for the Mpumalanga Department of Education, a role she fulfilled until February 2018, when she was then appointed as the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation.

In 2019, she was once again appointed, this time as the Deputy Minister of Basic Education.

Please stand and extend a warm KZN welcome to our esteemed Deputy Minister, Dr Mhaule as she joins me at the podium to address us.

Ngiyabonga