

**Opening Remarks by Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa (Ah! Dilizintaba), MP, Deputy Minister of Justice and Correctional Services:  
Virtual Meeting of Amathole District Development Model (DDM) Champions: 27 August 2020**

**Mhlekezzi, Nkosi Ngangomhlaba Mathanzima, the Provincial Chairperson of the Eastern Cape Moral Regeneration Movement, and all other Traditional Leaders present,**

Honourable MEC for Human Settlements and Amathole District Development Model Champion, Ms Nonkqubela Pieters,

Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature,

Honourable Executive Mayor of Amathole District Municipality, Councillor Khanyile Maneli,

Members of Amathole Mayoral Committee,

Chief Operations Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services, Mr Mandla Mkhabela,

Regional Commissioner of the Eastern Cape, Department of Correctional Services, Mr Phiko Mbambo,

Municipal Manager of Amathole District Municipality, Dr Thandekile Mnyimba,

Senior Officials from government departments and offices,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

We are delighted to be meeting with you all in this virtual meeting of Amathole District Development Model.

I would like to echo the words of my opening remarks, in the brief meeting of this nature, of 18 August 2020, for the benefit of those colleagues that were not present.

In 2019 our government introduced the concept of the District Development Model to improve intergovernmental cooperation and alignment at the coalface of service delivery and rapid response.

The essence of the model is that development is pursued through single, integrated plans per district – one district, one plan – that will outline the role of each sphere of government, as well as the role of communities, business and civil society sectors in each district.

As we all know, earlier this year, 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a National State of Disaster, in response to the Coronavirus pandemic and in this regard the country adopted the Risk Adjusted Strategy.

The government has since directed its focus to fight COVID-19 in districts and hotspots. All Districts are affected by the social, economic and health impacts of the pandemic. As we strengthen our District responses to the challenges, we are also embracing the opportunities for developing and building a better and safer South Africa.

The Cabinet meeting of 27 May 2020 designated Ministers and Deputy Ministers as District Champions for specific Districts and Metros in order to strengthen efforts aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic, and to assist in the fight against Gender Based Violence. According to the President, “the role of District Champions is to assist the President and Deputy President to manage the implementation of the District

Development Model to enhance the capacity of the state where it matters most”.

Since the declaration of the national lockdown a lot of work had to be done to fight the scourge of the pandemic that has taken place in the Eastern Cape, in general and at Amathole District, in particular, which has become one of the COVID-19 hotspots, as declared by the national Health Department.

In the past five months the pandemic has taken a heavy toll on the health of our people, our families and communities at large. The pandemic has tested the resilience of our public health system and the economy of the country. Our District is largely rural and heavily populated by migrant workers who are predominantly working in Gauteng and the Western Cape provinces. This situation has resulted in the rapid spread of the Coronavirus among our communities.

As you all know, the Department of Correctional Services particularly here in the Eastern Cape Region was hit hard by this pandemic. The Eastern Cape Region is the epicentre of the virus in the Department with currently 2 020 cases (833 officials and 1 187 inmates), out of these there are only 43 active cases (12 officials and 31 inmates) with recoveries at 1 958(812 officials and 1 146 inmates). This means that the Region currently has a 97% recovery rate with a death rate of 0, 9%. The Region currently has 19 deaths which are made up of nine (09) officials and ten (10) inmates.( as at 27 August 2020).

We all have noticed that the numbers of new confirmed cases of COVID-19 are scaling down, the rate of recovery from the virus is continuing to rise, and there is a decline in the number of daily infections, as seen in daily COVID-19 statistics. Indeed “the end of our nightmare is getting closer than anticipated”, to quote Premier Lubabalo Mabuyane who so declared recently.

We have observed, with a great deal of interest, the good work that has been taking place within Amathole District Municipality since the lockdown was declared. The Municipal Executive, working together with the national and provincial governments, and social partners, has been in the fore-front of coordinating the Amathole District Municipality COVID-19 Multi-Sectorial Plan, in line with the national, provincial and municipal directives.

Through this COVID-19 Multi-Sectorial Plan you have managed, among other things, to create awareness and educated the community about the need to stay safe, to wear masks, to practise social distancing, to regularly wash and sanitise hands, to maintain cleanlines and generally to comply with the Lockdown Regulations.

You have effected renovations to various hospitals of the District. You have delivered water, food parcels and special social grants to needy communities and schools. You have provided health services to the rural and urban areas, including the much needed oxygen and hospital beds.

A number of people were tested for COVID-19, treated, quarantined, isolated, where necessary. When some unfortunately fell prey to the virus, you managed to instil discipline in our people to observe the rules of avoiding overcrowding at the funerals. We bow our heads to mourn for all those who perished during this pandemic. We also salute

the front-line workers such as health workers, soldiers, the police, security and all other essential workers, who risk life and limb at the coal-face of the fight against this deadly scourge.

As we all know, on 15 August 2020 the President placed the country on Alert Level 2. In terms of the Risk Adjusted Strategy in dealing with the pandemic this means that there is a moderate COVID-19 spread of the virus, with a relatively high health systems readiness. Economic activity will be allowed with the necessary and appropriate stringent health protocols and safety precautions in place. Restrictions on family and social visits will also be lifted.

While the developments of Alert Level 2 are to be welcomed, these come with more responsibilities and a greater need for people to observe health protocols, in order to avoid virus infections.

The behavioural change campaign needs to be intensified with the aim to move people from their current state of anxiety to a state of agency, empowering them to take action and exercise self-care. The people should assume control of protecting both themselves and their families through the establishment of district forums and solidarity networks.

I think this meeting is a modest endeavour towards the broader one, to look for the opportunities and the lessons learned at Amathole District in the implementation of the response plan to COVID-19 and on service delivery to the people.

The capacity of the state needs to be improved. The COVID-19 debacle has shown us how to improve inter-governmental relations within all three (3) spheres of government, having to

interact and engage with provinces and local municipalities, in a robust manner.

It has also enhanced partnerships with social partners across the board, as government can never do everything alone. It further exposed our government to the urgent need to re-invest into technology and the fourth industrial revolution, in order to communicate more broadly through various mediums to reach even the most remote corners of our communities.

We also need to strengthen our partnership with traditional leaders, organs of civil society, spiritual formations, sport bodies, and local activists at ward levels.

In this Month of Women in South Africa, we pay tribute to the women of our land. Women, particularly black, poor and rural women continue to suffer the effects of poverty, unemployment and inequality. We are inundated daily by reports of accelerated Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), where women are brutally murdered by men who have lost their values of Ubuntu. The GBVF interferes with women's social and economic development, enjoyment of human rights and gender equality that they have attained since the dawn of the democratic South Africa. Gender-Based Violence and FEMICIDE has to be stopped by embracing our cultural values of respect for women and children from the early phases of educating our boys and young men.

At our District level, we need to ensure that we emphasise the centrality of traditional leaders in the Ward-Based Rapid Response Teams, and for them to provide guidance in our efforts to fight the demon of Gender Based Violence and Femicide in our communities.

We further need to identify projects that could be undertaken jointly by Amathole District Municipality, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and the Department of Correctional

Services where offender labour could be utilised, when time is opportune, in advancement of service delivery.

In this regard, in the second week of September 2020, I am planning to visit Xesi, Ngqushwa, Dutywa and Xhora, as part of the Department of Correctional Services Outreach Programme, where we donate some blankets to elderly women. This visit will help to amplify our efforts against Gender Based Violence and Femicide. I am sure the organisers of this event, will ensure that all my colleagues present here, are invited.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

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