

**The address of Eastern Cape Premier, Ms Noxolo Kiviet, at the occasion of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Eastern Cape and the Ministry of Defence and Military Veterans in Mthatha on the handover of the Mthatha Airport for upgrading - 21 May 2012**

*Programme Director*

*Minister for Defence and Military Veterans – uMam’u Lindiwe Sisulu*

*MEC for Transport – uMam’u Thandiswa Marawu*

*Commissioned and non-commissioned officer of the SANDF*

*Heads of Department and Executive Management of the Provincial Administration*

*Distinguished guests*

*Ladies and gentlemen*

I am delighted to be part of this watershed moment for the Province of the Eastern Cape. A moment when yet another milestone is being achieved to realize our ambitious massive economic infrastructure development programme announced earlier this year. This is clear demonstration that indeed, the 2012-13 financial year is a year of **Implementation and Action** which marks a new beginning in rolling out over R100 billion on investment in economic infrastructure that will change the face of the Province of the Eastern Cape forever for the benefit of millions of our people in and outside of the province.

It is important for everyone to understanding that over and above our sustained lobbying of national government, State Owned Enterprises and other major players to up their investment in the province, there is growing confluence of positive possibility that are colluding to make us succeed in all respects in the Eastern Cape. From this point going forward we are on a march to an Eastern Cape of our dreams, a compelling place to live, work, invest and play.

We are a province that has produced some of the finest human capital that was given to our nation and the world to advance the struggle for the liberation and development. If you look at every direction in this country, even in this room, you would see testimonies of this assertion. This signing ceremony is also symbolic gesture, for it takes place when, as Eastern Cape, we are hosting the Centenary Flame of our glorious movement, the African National Congress, which spearheaded the liberation struggle of all our people and continues to live and lead in waging a new struggle for a better life for all. Indeed we build a good foundation during the first 18 years of democracy, but now we need to multiply our pace of delivering services to our people, particularly those that continue to suffer from systemic under-investment during years of struggle for freedom, such as the people of this region.

Minister Sisulu, we are grateful to you for being part of a solution of reversing the spatial development disparities of the past and in affirming our commitment to make the Eastern Cape – a major player in the socio-economic and development landscape of South Africa.

We are also grateful to the President and the national government with all its State Owned Enterprises for their positive responses to our calls for a biased investment in the Eastern Cape as a fitting gratitude and tribute to our living and past legends of our liberation struggle who sacrificed all to gain freedom in their life time.

I am sure that with these developments, ooTat'uMadiba, ooTat'uMbeki and many other outstanding leaders produced by this Province should be happy with the turn of events and processes because they laid a solid foundation for us. Since the pronouncements made by the President in the State of the Nation Address and the Premier in the State of the Province Address in February we have witnessed heighten execution of major programmes and projects which include:

1. The official opening of the Ngqurha Port and the announcements of commitments to invest billions of rands in improving our sea ports and to attract investments in our Industrial Development Zones;
2. We turned the sod for the construction of a R1 billion truck construction company in Coega;
3. We signed an MOU with the South African National Roads Agency to handover over 2000 kilometers of our provincial roads, that were declared in the April 2012 Government Gazette national roads by the Minister of Transport to enable SANRAL to improve our provincial road network; and
4. Now the handover of Mthatha Airport to the South African National Defence Force for purposes of upgrading and building of a longer and bigger runway for large aircrafts to be able to land and take off here.

This project, as part of the Presidential Intervention Programme in the King Sabatha Dalindyebo Municipality, is meant to address spatial development disparities and in repositioning this region as a tourist, investment and development hub in the Eastern Cape for the benefit of many rural and underserved areas of our Province.

I trust that even doubting Thomas's would open their eyes and see **Eastern Cape as an awakening giant**, because we are fast becoming a huge construction site from whichever angle you enter the province. We are step by step succeeding in building our economy, in creating decent work particularly for the young people and in improving livelihoods even in rural areas. This is our airport. It is handed over provisionally for major upgrade and after five years it will revert back to the Eastern Cape as a much better facility that will contribute in boosting our economic growth and development, particularly in the KSD Municipal area.

Minister, this is a shot in the arm, that will strengthen our lobbying to have more airlines using this airport. We wish you all the best in your endeavours and in helping make Eastern Cape, indeed, a compelling place to live, work, invest and play.

I thank you all

**Premier Noxolo Kiviet (MPL)**  
**Province of the Eastern Cape**