
Honourable Speaker of the Legislature
Deputy Speaker
Members of the Executive Council
Members of the Provincial Legislature
People of the Eastern Cape
Comrades and friends

I am honoured to table the Annual Report of the Office of the Premier for the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008, along with the annual reports of the three public entities of the Office of the Premier, namely, the Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC); the Eastern Cape Youth Commission; and the Eastern Cape Appropriate Technology Unit (ECATU).
The year under review provided us as government with yet another opportunity to give expression and meaning to our democracy of fourteen years. Our focus therefore has been on continuation with the implementation of our pro-poor agenda as outlined in the electoral mandate and embedded in the Provincial Growth and Development Plan.

The Office of the Premier, supported by its public entities, recorded a number of achievements against the objectives set for this financial year. The high level achievements, which are detailed in the annual reports, include the following:-

1. PGDP Assessment

The PGDP assessment undertaken by the Office of the Premier together with ECSECC has been completed. The assessment was conducted through a consultative process with various stakeholders who assessed progress across each of the six PGDP pillars. The assessment clearly indicates a number of areas that require more attention. Indeed, the assessment outcomes point to a need for
improved planning and coordination capacity if government programmes are to have greater impact.

2. Integrated Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Guideline

As part of strengthening integrated planning in the province, an Integrated Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Guideline for the compilation of Annual Performance Plans by departments was developed.

Further more, the finalization of the national Government-wide M&E Framework assisted in giving direction to the on-going development of the provincial M&E system and related capacity building. The Province's M&E system has been endorsed by the Department of Public Service Administration for, possibly, piloting it in the country in the next financial year.
3. Recruitment Drive

During the year under review, an intensified recruitment drive was implemented which saw the province reducing its vacancy rate for funded positions from 91% to 10%. At year end the Office of the Premier as a department had filled all funded positions.

The adoption of the Provincial Unemployed Graduate Policy further enhanced capacity in departments and addressed some of the scarce skills challenges, as it resulted in the placing of more than 900 unemployed graduates in internship programmes.

A Provincial JIPSA Council has been established and together with the Provincial Skills Development Forum will coordinate skills development interventions in the province. To date an audit of the public and private sector skills gap and related needs is being conducted with the aim of informing sector specific interventions and development plans. The results of this will be shared with this House.
4. Audit Outcomes

Administratively, the Office of the Premier has successfully addressed the negative audit outcomes of the previous financial year. Asset management has been one of the high risk areas across all departments and interventions and turn around plans were developed to adequately address this risk yielding positive outcomes in the year under review.

Furthermore, having received an increased budget from the previous financial year, the department spent 99% of its budget resulting in 1% under spending.

5. Balasela Excellence Programme

Lastly the Balasela Excellence programme was launched in the year under review, with all officials pledging support to upholding the service delivery standards for the department. This programme of service excellence has been cascaded to other departments resulting in all departments adopting their service standards and Service Delivery Improvement Plans as well as Guides to Service Delivery Excellence.
Matters of corporate governance remained high on the agenda of the Executive Council and Top Management leading to the successes as outlined above.

Madam Speaker, having outlined the successes for this year, it is equally important to mention one or two key challenges we faced. Two of the most critical challenges include:

Firstly, the development of an ICT Strategy for the Province that will lay the foundation for improved service delivery, could not be finalised as planned. The strategy is aimed at expanding connectivity of the Province as well as to streamline and automate key business processes. Strides have been made to ensure the finalization of the strategy during 2008/9.

Secondly, the implementation of PMDS still remains a challenge across all departments in the province. The focus in the 2008/09 financial year is on providing hands on support to five of the big departments.
We are certain that in the next reporting period more positive feedback on the challenges mentioned will be noted.

Madam Speaker, as Government we will continue to consolidate our efforts to make the Eastern Cape a compelling place to live, work and invest. Our unwavering focus continues to be poverty reduction and employment creation, as well as widening access to basic services including water and sanitation.

As a Province with a potential for a strong and vibrant rural economy we have to move with speed to finalize the Provincial Rural Development Strategy. The Office of the Premier, supported by its public entities, and guided by key stakeholders, has to give leadership in the completion of this exercise.

I would like to thank the Honourable Members of the House, Members of the Executive Council, and all officials in the provincial administration for their collective support which has enabled us to reach this milestone.
In terms of Section 65 of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), I hereby table the Annual Report for the Office of the Premier, accompanied by the annual reports of ECSECC, ECATU, and the Eastern Cape Youth Commission.

I thank you.

Mr Mbulelo Sogoni
Premier of the Eastern Cape Province
7 October 2008

Ends