



WELCOME SPEECH BY HON S.R DANTJIE AT THE OPENING OF THE
COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT, MAHIKENG 3 OCTOBER 2014.

Distinguished Premier, MECs, Members of Parliament, Members of the Provincial Legislatures, representatives from Commonwealth family and guests: a warm welcome and greetings.

We meet today under the theme: **Deepening the Commonwealth's Commitment to Democracy and Youth Development**

South Africa is honoured to host the 6th Commonwealth Youth Parliament in this beautiful platinum province, North West. It is even exciting that Mahikeng, being a rural city and the seat of our Provincial Legislature, was chosen as a venue for this important event. It is indeed befitting that at this occasion of welcoming our Youth and distinguished guests from various countries around Commonwealth that I quote the words of Commonwealth Secretary General, Kamalesh Sharma, who during the CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) meeting held in Sri Lanka on the 15 November 2013 said "the good will and commitment of all our members states to seeking and finding common ground has long been our commonwealth strength, and remains our springboard for the future. Pains taking at times, its rewards are immeasurable." It is indeed true that even at this time when the world is facing serious challenges of youth joblessness, Commonwealth continue to play a pivotal role, creating platforms like this to promote dialogue.

Distinguished guests, the young people are our future leaders and in us lies the responsibility to nurture, guide and mentor them into being the best future leaders equipped with all skills necessary to move the world forward. We have long shared the view that our destinies are joined to drive us forward in seeking innovative ideas and to



find practical solutions to the ever changing task before the world today. Our long standing commitment is to train the youth and ensure their full participation in the making of a better world to live. As young people you should take pride in knowing that you are an asset to every nation as you bring innovative ideas, you bring fresh perspectives, new ideas, and inject lot of energy in our quest to move our nations forward. It is therefore important to create platforms like these for our youth to show case their talent and present forth their ideas towards promoting development, peace and democracy.

Distinguished quests, I wish to place on record the Northwest Government's deep appreciation for the decision of the CPA to make this event an annual event to be held in various regions within the Commonwealth. The decision of choosing the Northwest Provincial legislature as a host for this conference is quiet exciting and couldn't have come at a better time. It comes at a time when our province is undergoing a period of transformative change. A change that will see this province being recognised as a representative voice of the young people, particularly those from rural areas. There is no doubt that the ideas coming from this conference will spoil us for choices, bring new and innovative thinking and fresh perspectives that will help us achieve our goal of being a **Province of Choice** .Your inputs will help us move forward and unlock the potential for member governments to move forward in addressing the challenges facing the youth in the world at large.

Distinguished guests, we are delighted to welcome you to participate in this 6th Commonwealth Youth Conference. We sincerely hope that your presence here today will not only expose you to the process of parliamentary democracy, connect and link you with your like-minded peers but also to deepen Commonwealth commitment to democracy and youth development. It will help you to develop a sustainable long term relationships aimed at instilling a culture of sharing ideas, experiences and best



practices. Let me also extend our appreciation and word of gratitude to the Commonwealth Secretariat for the launch of a Young Professionals Programme on the 28 October 2014. This is a clear demonstration of Commonwealth's on-going commitment to youth development and empowerment and we applaud you for that noble milestone. What is even pleasing and worth noting is the fact that this programme will give our young graduates the chance to benefit from substantive, paid junior level roles. This is indeed a shift from a tradition of expecting young people to take unpaid or subsistence levels of internship to gain experience. The programme will make the young people realise that their work and contribution is being valued and will benefit those from less privileged backgrounds who found it difficult to work for free.

The Northwest province has set the stage for you the Youth of the world, to take charge of your destiny. The organisers of this event have planned activities and some tours that will undoubtedly give delegates and participants an opportunity to experience the rich cultural heritage of the Batswana people. The hospitality of our people and the friendliness of our officials will make your stay an unforgettable one.

I wish to extend the deepest and warm greetings from the Premier of Northwest, Honourable Supra Mahumapelo. Our gratitude and appreciations goes also to the Head of House of Traditional Leaders in Northwest, Kgosi Zibi, Makgosi a rona, our Tribal Authorities and all leaders from various provinces and various Commonwealth branches for your support and contributions in making this conference successful. We look forward to your fruitful interaction and a continuing partnership with our Government and the people of South Africa.

May God bless you all.