



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

**4IR CENTRE OF SPECIALISATION LAUNCH – GERT
SIBANDE TVET COLLEGE, STANDERTON**

14 APRIL 2026

SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 4IR CENTRE OF SPECIALISATION LAUNCH AT THE GERT SIBANDE TVET COLLEGE, STANDERTON – *Message of support | ±5 minutes*

14 April 2026

Programme Director, DDG Mr S. Zungu,

His Excellency, the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Paul Mashatile,

Honourable Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Buti Manamela,

The Honourable Premier of Mpumalanga, Mr Mandla Ndlovu,

The Executive Mayor of Gert Sibande District Municipality, Councillor WM Mngomezulu,

The Council Chairperson of Gert Sibande TVET College, Dr T. Ramasehla,

The Principal of Gert Sibande TVET College, Ms Zine Beku-Matlala,

Leaders from industry, including partners from SASOL and FESTO,

Distinguished stakeholders, artisans, and most importantly, the young people of Gert Sibande

Sanibonani! Ayeye Bantu Abasha Ayeye! Uzoyithola kanjani?

Today is such a significant day – as we have gathered here to witness and affirm a national commitment. A commitment that the future of this country will not be built in isolation from its young people, but rather through them. A commitment that access to opportunity must no longer be defined by geography, but by intentional spatial planning. And a commitment that economic participation must move from aspiration to lived reality. Because what stands before us today is a deliberate intervention in the architecture of inequality.

This centre matters because of where it is. In Standerton.

In a community. Within reach of young people who, for far too long, have had to travel distances - not only in kilometres, but in access, in exposure, and in opportunity. Its presence here collapses that distance. It signals, with clarity, that



opportunity must reside where young people live. And in doing so, it transforms access from something theoretical - into something tangible, visible, and immediate.

Programme Director, as the National Youth Development Agency, we approach this moment not as observers - but as active participants in building this ecosystem. And here in Gert Sibande, that work is already taking shape in meaningful and measurable ways. We have been intentional in constructing pathways for young people into both the public and private sectors - ensuring that opportunity is not random, but aligned to skills, to potential, and to economic demand. We have worked alongside employers and partners to open up spaces for work exposure and job placement - because we recognise that experience remains one of the most critical barriers between young people and employment.

At the same time, our approach to skills development has been deliberate and targeted. We do not train in isolation - we train within value chains. We train with a clear understanding of where opportunities exist, and where they are emerging. That is why, in this district, over 2000 of young people have been equipped not only with technical competencies, but with the confidence and preparedness required to enter the world of work. Honourable DP, these are young people who are now able to walk into opportunity ready - not uncertain, having gone through our different trainings - Business Management, Job Preparedness, Life Skills, Cooperate Governance and Sales Pitching.

Equally, where young people have chosen the path of entrepreneurship, we have walked that journey beside them. Through grant funding, mentorship, and ongoing advisory support, we have invested directly into youth-owned enterprises with 71 young people in this district alone. Importantly, this includes young persons with disabilities, ensuring that inclusion is not peripheral to our work, but embedded within it. And these interventions are catalytic. Because through them, more than 100 jobs have already been created within the local economy - jobs that did not exist before young people were given the tools, the support, and the opportunity to build.

But perhaps most critically, Programme Director, we are shifting the conversation from intervention to sustainability. From access to continuity. Because it is not enough to bring a young person into a programme. We must ensure that they are able to exit into something real - into markets, into employment, into long-term economic participation.



Honourable DP, this is precisely why the Fourth Industrial Revolution cannot be treated as a distant concept. It is more of a present reality. And if we do not actively democratise access to it, we risk deepening the very inequalities we seek to dismantle. As the 5th Board of Directors of the NYDA, we are unequivocal in our position: Digitisation must be a tool of inclusion, not exclusion. It must reach rural communities. It must reach township economies. It must reach young people who have historically been left at the margins of innovation and technological advancement. And centres such as this one are critical instruments in achieving that. They do not simply introduce technology, but they localise it. They do not merely train, they position young people within the economy of the future.

Simultaneously Honourable Premier, we must recognise that no economy can function, let alone grow - without a strong foundation of skills. TVET colleges are core to that foundation. They are not an alternative - they are a necessity. They are where we produce the artisans, the technicians, the builders of this economy. They are where theory is translated into capability. And in a country such as ours, where infrastructure, industrialisation, and economic inclusion remain urgent priorities - the role of TVET Colleges cannot be overstated. This Centre of Specialisation stands as a powerful expression of that understanding.

As we mark 50 years since 1976, we are reminded that young people have always been at the forefront of shaping the direction of this nation. In 1976, young people demanded access - to education, to dignity, to recognition. Fifty years later, the responsibility before us is to ensure that access evolves into meaningful participation. Participation in the economy, in innovation, in building a nation that works for all. This centre is part of that journey. While it reflects progress, it also calls us to deepen that progress.

Through initiatives such as Phanda Thursday, that we will be launching in communities from May – where we will be mobilising young people, particularly those not in employment, education or training, to actively access opportunities, programmes, and support services that unlock economic participation. We will continue to call on young people to rise - to seek, to engage, to take up opportunity. But we also recognise a fundamental truth: Opportunity must be visible in order to be taken. And this centre makes that visibility possible. It gives direction to ambition. It gives structure to possibility. It ensures that for a young person who is not in employment, education, or training - there is now a place to go. A place to begin. A place to build.



As I take my seat colleagues, let us understand this moment for what it truly is. It is not the completion of a project, but rather the opening of pathways. Pathways for young people to move from uncertainty to purpose. From exclusion to participation and from potential to productivity. And if we are deliberate, coordinated, committed, then this centre will not simply stand as infrastructure. It will stand as evidence that when we invest in young people, we invest in the future of this country.

Ngiyabonga.