



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

**ONGOYE COMPUTER LABORATORY
CONNECTIVITY CEREMONY
ONGOYE, KZN**

23 JULY 2026



SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE

CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE ONGOYE

COMPUTER LAB CONNECTIVITY CEREMONY – *Remarks | ±10 minutes*

23 July 2026

Programme Director,

Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Honourable Njabulo Nzuza,

Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Honourable Nomalungelo Gina

Honourable MEC for Education, Mr Sipho Hlomuka,

His Majesty's Representative, Inkosi Mkhwanazi,

Our partners from MTN,

The Principal, members of the School Governing Body,

Educators and members of the Staff,

Parents and members of the Ongoye community,

Distinguished guests,

And to the young people of Ongoye,

Good morning.

It is a privilege to return to this school because today's visit represents something that is very important to us as the National Youth Development Agency. We are not here to launch a new initiative, nor are we here simply because it appears on a programme. We are here because we made a commitment to this school when we visited last September, and today we have returned to honour that commitment.

I believe there is no greater measure of leadership than the willingness to return and complete what you started, particularly when that commitment has the potential to change the lives of young people.



When we first walked through this computer laboratory, we were encouraged by what had already been achieved. The school had computers and a dedicated space where learners could begin developing the digital skills that are increasingly shaping the world around us. However, as we engaged with the school leadership and educators, it became clear that one critical piece of the puzzle was still missing.

Without reliable internet connectivity, these computers could not fully serve the purpose for which they had been provided. They could not give learners access to online educational resources, digital learning platforms, research tools or the countless opportunities that now exist beyond the walls of a classroom. We left Ongoye knowing that our work here was unfinished.

Through our partnership with MTN, we have been able to ensure that this computer laboratory becomes what it was always intended to be: a fully functional learning environment that prepares young people for a world in which technology is no longer optional but essential.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to MTN for responding positively to our request and for recognising that investing in connectivity is, in fact, an investment in young people. This partnership reflects what can be achieved when government and the private sector work together with a shared purpose, because the responsibility of preparing our young people for the future belongs to all of us.

As the National Youth Development Agency, one of our priorities is to ensure that no young person is excluded from opportunity because of where they live. We often speak about creating an inclusive economy and preparing young people for the future, but those ambitions can only become reality if we address the barriers that continue to exist between young people and opportunity.

One of those barriers is the digital divide. We cannot expect learners in rural communities to compete in a global economy if they do not have access to the very tools that make participation in that economy possible. Closing that gap is not simply about installing internet connectivity; it is about ensuring that every young person has a fair opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence required to succeed in an increasingly digital world.

The world that awaits you as learners is changing at an extraordinary pace. Universities are embracing digital learning, businesses are using technology to reach new markets, employers are seeking digital competencies across almost every profession, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence are transforming the nature of work itself.



Whether you dream of becoming a doctor, an engineer, a teacher, a lawyer, an entrepreneur or a software developer, technology will almost certainly form part of your journey. It is therefore essential that young people are equipped not only to use technology but also to understand it, innovate through it and use it to solve the challenges facing their communities.

This is why today is about expanding the horizons of every learner who will use this facility in the years ahead. It is about creating an environment where curiosity can be nurtured, where research becomes easier, where learning extends beyond prescribed textbooks, and where young people are able to engage with ideas, innovations and opportunities from across South Africa and the rest of the world.

Our hope is that this laboratory will become a place where future entrepreneurs write their first business plans, where future engineers begin discovering their passion for science and mathematics, where future innovators develop solutions to challenges facing communities like Ongoye, and where every learner begins to appreciate that their dreams are valid regardless of where they come from.

To the learners seated before us today, I want you to understand that every investment made in this school is ultimately an investment in you. The value of this laboratory will never be measured by the number of computers it contains or by the speed of its internet connection. Its true value will be measured by the knowledge you gain, the skills you develop and the choices you make with the opportunities that have been placed before you.

I encourage you to use this space with purpose. Challenge yourselves to learn something new every day. Explore subjects that spark your curiosity. Develop digital skills that will prepare you for the careers of tomorrow. Most importantly, believe that your ambitions deserve the same chance to flourish as those of any young person anywhere else in our country.

I also want to acknowledge the educators and leadership of this school. Technology, no matter how advanced, can never replace the role of a committed teacher. Your dedication continues to shape the lives of these learners every day, often under circumstances that require resilience, creativity and sacrifice. We hope that the improved connectivity provided through this partnership will strengthen your ability to teach, inspire and prepare these young people for a rapidly changing world. We thank you for the work you continue to do in building the next generation of South Africans.

Today's programme has also been designed to bring a range of services directly to young people and members of the community. In addition to the handover of this connected computer laboratory, young people will have access to youth



development services, voter registration through the Independent Electoral Commission, services offered by the Department of Home Affairs and the YOMO SIM Card initiative. This reflects our belief that youth development is most effective when institutions work together to ensure that opportunities and services are brought closer to the communities that need them most.

As I conclude, I would like to leave you with this thought. Last September we left this school knowing that there was still work to be done. Today we return having honoured the commitment we made, but the next chapter of this story belongs to you. The future of this laboratory will not be determined by the National Youth Development Agency or by MTN. It will be determined by the learners who choose to use it to expand their knowledge, develop their talents and pursue lives of purpose.

My hope is that years from now, when many of you have graduated from universities, started businesses, entered professions and become leaders in your own right, you will remember this laboratory as one of the places where your future began to take shape.

Thank you to MTN for believing in this vision, thank you to the school for welcoming us back, and thank you to the young people of Ongoye for reminding us why investing in the next generation will always be the most important investment we can make.

I thank you.