



UNITED DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

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OPEN LETTER

His Excellency President TM Mbeki
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Your Excellency

TRANSKEI STATE OF DISREPAIR: INFRASTRUCTURE

May I extend my sincere compliments of the new year to Your Excellency and wish you every success in the ensuing period.

As you are preparing for Lekgotla meeting with your colleagues in government and the new National Executive Committee (NEC) of the African National Congress (ANC) in two weeks time, I have considered it imperative to bring to your attention some of the pertinent issues that are worth noting.

It is a fact that in the last three years, service delivery has been drastically affected because of infighting caused by the well documented political debate around succession within the ruling party.

This has undoubtedly affected service delivery at all levels of government. It is no strange coincidence that one of the most poorest provinces, the Eastern Cape, has returned ±R1,4 billion to Treasury which reflects the highest level of incompetence whilst people are suffering on the ground. For example how does the National and Provincial Ministries of Housing and Education justify the non-expenditure of R400 million and ±R600 million respectively, which were budgeted for housing and the building of schools. This presents a very serious crisis, just for one province, the Eastern Cape, not to be able to deliver such essential services.

One other issue that I wish to bring to your attention is that whilst I was doing constituency work during the festive season, I noticed and also received complaints that we must do something as Public Representatives about the state of disrepair of our roads especially in the Transkei area. The National Road N2, from Kei Bridge to Umzimkulu is full of potholes



let alone the poor maintenance standards shown by some contractors on sites who seem to care less about accepted road building standards with the apparent lack of supervision. The situation is even worse when you look at other main arterial roads some of which lead to the renowned Wild Coast, a tourism economic hub of the Eastern Cape.

It was a nasty seen to see a number of tourists who were busy trying to repair their tyres and could not reach their destinations on time. I wondered whether they thought they were really in South Africa or perhaps somewhere in Afghanistan. The truth of the matter, Mr President, is that the infrastructure of Transkei is collapsing. You do not need to be a qualified Engineer to confirm this view. For example you can take a drive through towns like Butterworth and Mthatha and their suburbs where you are not welcomed by potholes but by ditches. The same experience prevails in the other twenty six towns of the said area. Bitter complaints have been received from all, especially motorists, who complained about consistent punctures that are posing a serious economic threat to the said region.

It can hardly be overemphasised that this region has, for the past thirteen years, been loyal to our democracy by turning out in good numbers to polling stations. Indeed even in our Political Party Conferences, most delegates are drawn from the same region.

There is a growing perception that there is a deliberate ploy to sideline the said region and only make them voting cattle.

WORD OF ADVICE

What I have said above is not new to yourself and your cabinet. I am sure you have come across these complaints in your Imbizos. One then begins to question whether the Ministers and the Premiers have been loyal to your good office in its call for perfect service delivery. The same could be said about the electrification of the same area, bringing fresh water, the state of disrepair of health facilities, etc.

With particular reference to the road problems, I would strongly advise that you commission a team of engineers, perhaps drawn from the SANDF who are well resourced, to verify and authenticate the points raised here above and that they should table this report in your Lekgotla meeting in a few weeks time.

It is in that meeting that perhaps your cabinet can approve that the Departments of Public Works and Transport should be supervised by these Engineers from SANDF to urgently bring the status quo to normality. In that way the government will save millions if not billions of rand paid to these bogus consultants who never supervise work on the ground.

This proposed approach, if it succeeds, can be used as a pilot project that can ramify or be replicated in other Provinces. In the meantime Government must ask itself as to whether the infrastructure of Transkei has been integrated into the same structural levels of the then South Africa, knowing fully well its historical disadvantageous status (apartheid reserves). For example if you travel from George to Kei Bridge on the Southern part of the



Eastern Cape and from Mozambique borders to Umtamvuna river, you will find that these areas are ever green and the roads are in perfect condition. When you go past those two rivers you start wondering as to whether rain ever falls in the said region whilst many perennial rivers are flowing through to the sea.

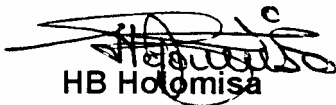
When Transkeians supported change which our Military Government then spearheaded, they had a legitimate expectation that misery will, for the first time, be a thing of the past, but alas that little infrastructure they had is now collapsing with no one trying to reconstruct it. Truth, Mr President, hurts but unfortunately this is the reality of what is obtaining in the said region.

As you are aware Mr President that I have written numerous letters about similar issues in the past, for other provinces but only acknowledgements were received. No progress reports were ever given to this office. It is, therefore, hoped that this will not only end up in files, but appropriate steps will be taken and a report back is made.

Finally we wish that your Lekgotla meeting will deliberate extensively on the issues raised herein.

Wishing you every success, in your deliberations

Yours in Nation Building



HB Holomisa

President United Democratic Movement