



**Address by Mr Bantu Holomisa, MP (UDM President)
to Transkei residents from each of the 28 magisterial districts in
the Transkei re
Transkei infrastructure neglect and decay
on 24 January 2008 in Mthatha**

Ladies and Gentlemen

I must thank all of you for making the time to attend this meeting today. You could have been at other engagements, but - like me - you share a deep concern for the welfare of the Transkei region and its people. That is demonstrated by the presence here today of people from every one of the 28 magisterial districts of Transkei. I raised these concerns which motivate us with the President of the country early this year, and subsequently received a response from the Eastern Cape Premier relating to the pathetic state of infrastructure in the Transkei region.

The history of the Transkei is well-documented, right from the early European missionaries who built schools and roads, through the Bhunga-period, through the Transkei Self-governance period, the period of Independence under Paramount Chief KD Matanzima, and then the Military Government of Holomisa and others.

This region therefore has for many years observed the divisions among its citizens both politically and economically. It was always used as a reservoir for cheap labour by big companies in Apartheid South Africa. At the same time, whilst the old regime used the Transkei in this way, this region also produced a large band of people who resisted Apartheid. Former ANC Presidents OR Tambo and Nelson Mandela are from here, as are the Sisulus, Chris Hani, Winnie Mandela, Govan Mbeki, President Thabo Mbeki and many others. A great number of people from this region sacrificed to bring about freedom and democracy for all the people of South Africa.

Indeed I was fortunate that the government I led from 1987 to 1994 facilitated the incorporation of the region into South Africa in 1994. It was a smooth transition, and that is evidenced by the fact that the people of the region vote in droves whether it is local or national elections.

When one looks at the history of the Transkei one finds that the region still suffers from the scars of prejudice by the Apartheid Government.

Politically, although there were Bantustan administrations, the powers-that-be always prejudiced the area and viewed it as a hub of revolution. Indeed we witnessed this from 1988 to 1994 when we openly worked with the ANC in this region, and the Apartheid Government ensured that the budget was cut to the bone and money for capital projects halted as well.

You were all witnesses to this.

When the 1994 election came the people of this region breathed a sigh of relief, thinking that they would be part of bigger and better things to come.

Since 1994 the provincial Government under the ANC has contributed a lot by bringing electricity and water and building new roads to some areas. They also funded local government

structures which previously had to depend solely on rates from residents. There is no doubt that there have been improvements in terms of many things.

But the critical issue is the neglect and decay of infrastructure in the Transkei. What is coming out clearly is that the closure without substitute of the maintenance units by the Bisho Government as early as 1994 contributed to the current neglect and decay. A lot of people also lost their jobs in the process. It means that roads built before and even after 1994 have fallen into disrepair. Similarly, the irrigation schemes have fallen into neglect. It is a shame when you travel on N2 in Transkei that the companies who win road maintenance tenders can't do a repair job that lasts more than a month. One cannot understand how tenders can be awarded to companies without the equipment and skills to do the job. Yet when you look at the companies that win maintenance tenders on national roads elsewhere in South Africa they have the correct equipment and skills. The outsourcing of the maintenance work has not been a successful strategy; if it had worked we would not be sitting here today.

Whether you are from East London, Cape Town or Durban, the moment that you enter the Transkei you realize you are entering the Third World. Take the Umtamvuna, Kei and Umzimkulu rivers, visitors must surely wonder why on the one side the land is green and fertile, whilst on the Transkei side it is grey and lifeless. And then as you travel into the heart of the region and pass through the towns and villages, one might think that he/she is travelling somewhere in Afghanistan.

History will vindicate the former Military Government of the Transkei that we researched and drafted proper budgets for submission to Pretoria - who, whether we liked it or not, funded all the homelands at that stage. The Transkei was terribly under-budgeted by the Apartheid government and the study conducted by Rich Berry, the then Transkei economic advisor, assisted by Advocate Majokweni and the late Lungiswa Ludidi confirmed that in fact in the late 1980s the backlogs in infrastructure in the Transkei was approximately R13 billion. We also spent close to R13 million on a study in conjunction with DBSA on water infrastructure in the Umzimvubu basin which would have helped the farmers, reticulated the whole of Transkei with clean water and also would've provided electricity. Such a scheme was designed to upgrade the infrastructure to be in line with the rest of South Africa. Yes, the late Prof Mdoda a renowned Civil Engineer and lecturer from the then University of Transkei represented the Transkei in this scheme and was assisted by Mr Moaholi another well-known engineer of Moaholi Associates, who is now based in Johannesburg.

I felt that I should inform you of these issues because we need not reinvent the wheel. The work has already been done and we might simply only have to remove the dust from these studies and re-cost them.

The envisaged budget for the upgrading of infrastructure then included the upgrading and maintenance of roads, schools, fencing off grazing and grain lands properly, which would've allowed more children to go to school.

We are therefore, ladies and gentlemen, meeting here as a result of the invitation to me by the Eastern Cape Premier, Nosiviwe Balindlela, to inspect the infrastructure of the Transkei with her. So I thought for such a wonderful trip for us in this region it would be good for me to draft together with you, the residents, a report on the infrastructure in the region to submit to the President of the country and to the Premier. As indeed it is my intention to personally hand over

the report coming from the people from all the areas of Transkei, to President Mbeki in Parliament - in full view of the nation - in the week of 12th February when we will be debating the state of the nation.

For the purposes of this exercise therefore it is clear that time is not on our side and we need to compile and submit this report as suggested. It should also be stated clearly that from now on it will be the responsibility of every institution in the region - be it local government, provincial institution, traditional leadership, civil society - to monitor if the money is being spent and spent correctly, should a new infrastructure programme and budget be approved within the next financial years.

It has to be made clear also that we are not gathering here to create a parallel structure to administer the funds that have been allocated to the responsible structures to manage. We are here as residents to indicate whether the allocated funds are sufficient to address our needs and to monitor that the relevant responsible local, provincial and national government structures do their jobs and deliver.

We may think of keeping this forum active until these problems are resolved and to ensure that we can in future call on a local government, mayor or a premier to come and account on whether they are delivering. The time of using the people of this region as voting fodder has come to an end, whether it is for ANC, UDM or PAC conferences or local, provincial and national elections. We must all collectively take responsibility and together address the major challenge facing this region.

We must avoid being dubbed as enemies or opponents of the Government, but rather position ourselves as an advisory board and look at urban and rural renewal strategies. If there is an emerging consensus to formalize this arrangement, we can bounce some ideas around; we might call it the Transkei Sustainable Development Forum. The time for us to be told what is good for us by people who don't live in this region is over; we must collectively take responsibility for our development, and try to do so in an a-political fashion so that we can get our region on par with the rest of the country.

If you have been given an opportunity to make an improvement and failed; then you should move over and give others a chance to make a difference.

Thank you