

Pieter Pretorius Eskom Expo Special Awards Speech 2018

TITLE: Eskom Expo Special Awards Speech by Pieter Pretorius, Chairperson – Expo Board of Directors

EVENT: 38th Eskom Expo for Young Scientists International Science Fair

DURATION: +/- 6 Minutes

VENUE: Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre, Boksburg

DATE: Thursday, 4 October 2018

Deputy Minister of Public Enterprises Mr Ben Martins, Eskom CEO Mr Phakamani Hadebe, Eskom Group Executive for Sustainability, Transmission and Risk, Mr Thava Govender, VIPs and sponsors, teachers and judges, volunteers, and, most importantly — our young scientists — welcome to the Eskom Special Awards Ceremony of the 38th Eskom Expo for Young Scientists International Science Fair.

It is really an honour to be in the same room as all you brilliant and talented young people — you truly are the future of this country, this continent and the whole world.

Firstly, I would like to commend you all for making it to this point. All your dedication, your hard work and all the sacrifices I'm sure each and every one of you has made preparing for this year's Expo were not in vain.

As legendary Portuguese soccer player Cristiano Ronaldo once said:

“When you have talent and if you don't work the talent then you are going to win nothing.”

One of his other most famous quotes is:

“I see myself as the best footballer in the world. If you don't believe you are the best, then you will never achieve all that you are capable of.”

And I'm sure the judges will agree that this year's entries and presentations were some of the best we've seen in the 38 years that the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists has existed and that deserves a round of applause.

Now, the Eskom Expo's primary aim is to encourage the youth of South Africa, and Africa, to participate in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and innovation in order to promote an interest in these areas, and of you have shown this.

As some of you might know, the Expo has also created opportunities for young learners to develop and go after what interests you in the field of science and technology. Just by a show of hands, who here plans to study further at a university?

It is therefore important that we as the Expo create an environment where self-motivated learners such as yourselves are encouraged to do your best and a space where your hard work is rewarded. This we do to improve your chances of getting into university and furthering your studies after high school. Essentially, the Expo “does the things for a successful future to be done.”

Our winners tonight will walk off with prizes to the value of Rxxmillion. These exciting prizes include bursaries from Eskom, Siemens, Wits University, University of Pretoria, gadgets and laptops and a chance to travel overseas to take part in other prestigious science fairs.

Now it is also important to note that this year marks the centenary of one of South Africa’s greatest and most overlooked heroes, Mama Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu.

On the 21st of this month, we will celebrate what would have been Mama Sisulu’s 100th Birthday. Mama Sisulu, like many of you, was a bright student growing up in the rural parts of what is now known as the Eastern Cape. This area gave us many great individuals such as South Africa’s first black Medical Doctor, William Anderson Soga, his father Tiyo Soga who was South Africa’s first black ordained preacher and Nelson Mandela, the first democratically elected president of South Africa.

As one of the first black women involved in politics at the time, Mama Albertina Sisulu led the women’s march to the Union buildings in Pretoria, protesting the unjust laws of the Apartheid regime. So you can thank Mama Sisulu for never having to go to school on 9 August.

While Mama Albertina Sisulu initially had plans to become a nun after high school, she eventually decided to go into the field of medicine and trained as a nurse in order to better serve communities similar to the one she grew up in and also to help those around her.

This is no different to what you all have done here this week. Through your scientific and technological innovations, you can achieve the impossible and create a better world for yourselves as well as the generations that will come after you. Who knows, maybe one of you sitting here will be able to one day, advance the field of science and technology to the point where Wakanda is more than just a made-up country from the movies — perhaps one of you sitting here will create a real-life Wakanda where daily life is made better by technological innovation.

I think it’s safe to say that all you young geniuses here are real-life superheroes. You have shown through your presentations during this year’s Expo that you want to solve the problems in your communities, in your provinces, in your countries and in the world we all live in.

In Celebrating Mama Sisulu’s centenary, we should reflect on how far we’ve come as a country and globally as a society in the last 100 years. Many years ago,

when myself and some of your teachers were your age, a lot of the tech tools you have at your disposal today seemed far-fetched. We had to make use of cassette tapes and vinyls to listen to our favourite songs and write letters to communicate with our friends. Now you guys are able to listen to *Fela In Versace* on your iPhone while sending memes to your friends on WhatsApp.

All this was made possible by scientific discoveries and advancements championed by geniuses such as your self — and that is the whole point of this Expo. And that's why a number of you are being honoured with Special Awards this evening. You have shown creativity and a strong aptitude for solving the issues of the world and creating a healthier and brighter future for all of us. Congratulations to all our winners.

And without further ordure, please help me welcome on stage Eskom's Group Executive for Sustainability, Transmission and Risk, and the Eskom Exco champion for EXPO, Mr Thava Govender.