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Proposed Address
Mr Kobus Steyn, Group Executive (Acting): Group Capital
TRAC/Eskom Partnership Launch, Eastern Cape
24 February 2018

Programme director

Honourable Premier of the Eastern Cape, Mr Phumulo Masualle

Members of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature

Executive mayors from the various districts

Mayors from the local municipalities

Business and community leaders

Government officials

Learners, teachers, and parents

Members of the community

Members of the media

Eskom leadership and staff

Esteemed guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon

The late British publisher, writer and poet, T.S. Eliot once said: “It is in fact a part of the function of education to help us escape, not from our own time – for we are bound by that – but from the intellectual and emotional limitations of our time.”

This profound statement augurs well with today’s event as it highlights our commitment to the shared responsibility of preparing our children to be intellectually, and emotionally ready for the future.



Ladies and gentlemen, 2018 has officially been declared the year of Nelson Mandela who, if alive, would have turned a hundred years on 18 July. Apart from dedicating his entire life to serving the people of South Africa, Mandela taught us, through action, the importance of education by not allowing the shackles of prison to stifle his personal development. His persistence and determination paid off when he finally obtained an LLB qualification through distance learning. In a small but significant way, today's event represents Nelson Mandela's vision – the vision of lending a hand to educate a nation.

We are faced with the reality that the future of our nation is dependent on our youth and that only a skilled and educated youth can build a sustainable future. Being mindful of this reality, two years ago, Eskom – through the Eskom Development Foundation – invested in a three-year strategic partnership with the Technology Research Activity Centre (TRAC) of South Africa.

This was the birth of TRAC 1, which changed the lives of learners at five high schools in the Kouga Municipality. The overarching goal of TRAC 1 was to improve the standard of physical science education through practical learner education and teacher training for Grades 10 to 12. We are proud of the results achieved in TRAC 1, especially the accomplishment of two of the five participating schools, which improved their pass rates by moving from 66% to 70% and 98% to 100%, respectively, last year. This is very encouraging. Today, symbolising its success, I am proud to help launch TRAC 2, an extension of this educational programme.

TRAC 2 extends our current support programme to an additional 25 schools in Cofimvaba, Uitenhage, Qumbu, East London, and Libode District areas – increasing the number of participating schools to 30 in the Eastern Cape. We could not have done this without the vision, support, and dedication of the provincial Department of Education, whom we thank for their diligent approach in the selection of the schools.



These private-public partnerships demonstrate a shared social responsibility in line with government's skills development initiative in creating access to quality education for all and driving the long-term goal of poverty eradication.

One of the country's many challenges remains the importance of popularising mathematics, physical science, and related fields among learners. TRAC has this potential, as it fuels enthusiasm in our children through exciting and engaging methods in teaching and learning.

In addition, we need to remove barriers, perceived and real, in learning and teaching these subjects by arming teachers with the appropriate skills. It is our hope that TRAC 2 will increase the pool of excellent teachers, who will motivate learners and remove the fear that is associated with teaching and learning these subjects.

The touching testimony of Masixole Jarom and the countless nationwide success stories bear testimony that TRAC is yielding positive results. What is encouraging is that these beneficiaries are predominantly from previously disadvantaged communities, with some from single-parent-headed households.

As a developing country, we realise that our future relies on having young people with relevant skills who can participate actively in the economic development of the country. It is for this reason that Eskom invests millions annually in education, starting in the early learning phase right up to the tertiary level. TRAC was, therefore, a natural selection in our quest to improve education, and it joins a host of other programmes. One such programme is the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists, held nationally and annually.

You will be encouraged to know that one of your own in this province, Siyabulela Xuza, is a product of this programme. The 22-year-old from Mthatha, in the Eastern Cape, the winner of the 2006 award, is currently studying at Harvard University in the United States and is developing a new energy technology to save the planet. Last year, he attended the May launch of the space shuttle Endeavour as a guest of

NASA and also had the opportunity to meet the then United States First Lady, Michelle Obama. To top it all, Siyabulela was honoured by NASA's Lincoln Laboratories, who named a then newly discovered asteroid after him. "Siyaxuza" is a giant asteroid, located near the planet Jupiter, and is also described as "minor planet 23182". He has indeed "reached for the stars", literally and figuratively, serving as motivation to a number of young people.

Now, I would like to turn to learners from the beneficiary schools represented today. We would like to read about your achievements as you make a difference in the world in the not too distant future.

Ladies and gentlemen, Siyabulela and Masixole's examples of success are echoed in the collective achievements of TRAC, which include the following:

- Over 2 000 learners and 30 educators from 30 schools benefit from the programme.
- Over 6 000 hands-on learner exposures have been recorded.
- Two of the five participating schools, Humansdorp and Nico Malan High Schools, improved their matric pass rates, moving from 66% to 70% and 98% to 100%, respectively, during the 2017 academic year.

We are encouraged by the progress made by the schools over the past few years and believe that, at the end of the three-year period, we will collectively reflect on the overall success of the programme with tremendous pride, knowing that we have made a lasting difference in the lives of our future leaders in the Eastern Cape.

On this note, I would like to pay tribute to the principals, teachers, and – most importantly – the learners. You have demonstrated true leadership by taking the opportunity and facing the challenges head-on. Your success demonstrates what is possible through hard work and dedication.



As Eskom approaches its 95th anniversary on 1 March this year, we remain committed to continuing to make a lasting contribution to the lives of South Africans through our corporate social investment vehicle, the Eskom Development Foundation.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are grateful for this opportunity to make a positive change in education. We hope that the new TRAC participants will make the most of this opportunity and strive to achieve even better results than we saw in TRAC 1. Dream big, and work hard!

Working with TRAC, we will proudly continue to paint a brighter future for our youth – *as we move towards a prosperous future for South Africa.*

I thank you.