SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND LAND
AFFAIRS, HON. LULU XINGWANA (MP)

LAUNCH OF THE LAND AND AGRARIAN REFORM PROJECT
(LARP) IN THE PROVINCE OF THE FREE STATE

23 FEBRUARY 2008
FREE STATE PROVINCE
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for welcoming me to your part of the world. It is always a pleasure to find oneself in such hospitable company. Before I say anything further, let me remind you that it is indeed: Business unusual, all hands on deck. No more sitting back moaning: “Oh what is the use? There is nothing I can do!” As our President stated, it is high time we pull up ourselves by our own bootstraps and really get down to work. This is for the sake of our children, descendants, our communities and, ultimately, our country.
Honourable Premier and MEC, as we all know, our Government has set a target of redistributing 30% of white-owned agricultural land by 2014. This target equates to approximately 34 million hectares. This is a massive figure. That is why in line with the Presidential Apex Priority number 7, we developed the Land and Agrarian Reform Project, otherwise known as LARP to provide a new paradigm for sector service delivery. This framework for delivery and collaboration on land reform and agricultural support creates a delivery paradigm for agricultural and other support services based on the concept of “one-stop shop” service centres. These will be located close to farming and rural beneficiaries. A very good example of this process is the reason why we are all gathered here today.

LARP has already been launched in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal provinces.

Members of the media, ladies and gentlemen: The main objective of LARP, amongst others, is to redistribute 5 million hectares of white commercial agricultural land to 10,000 willing, enthusiastic, workaholic and serious new agricultural producers by 2009. We also aim to provide universal access to agricultural support services to these individuals so that we can realise the increase of agricultural production by 10 to 15% under the Ilima/Letsema campaign.

Furthermore, the LARP will concentrate on defined focus areas, rely on aligned and comprehensive support to projects, joint planning and implementation, utilisation of partnerships with sector partners,
decentralisation of decision making and careful monitoring of the success and sustainability of individual projects. Ladies and gentlemen, as we are jointly leading this accelerated land and agrarian reform process, from time to time, the MEC, the Mayor and I will come back to the Maile Trust to see if the investment we entrusted to them was worth it.

This is for the simple reason that Government does not have a bottomless pit of money that it can just dish out to people who will not ensure returns on the investment. We want to see progress. We want you to prosper. We want you to make an impact on your families, community and on this lovely country of ours. We want you to become serious entrepreneurs to be reckoned with. It is indeed business unusual, all hands on deck!

Honourable MEC, we will this year also focus on providing support to the beneficiaries of restituted and redistributed land to ensure that it is utilised productively and sustainably. Recent experiences of land reform projects that have failed or are under the threat of collapsing have underlined the shortcomings of a singular emphasis on land acquisition and redistribution at the expense of equal efforts on the provision of post-settlement support.

This is all the more reason that this past Monday we launched the Settlement Implementation Strategy (SIS). The scope of the SIS includes the Restitution, the Commonage and the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development as well as Tenure Security.
Today we congratulate the Maile Trust who have benefited from an investment of R1, 6 million. They are now owners of a 583 hectare vibrant and productive Tussenvuur farm on which there is a house, functioning three windmills, two submersible pumps, four cement dams and one tank.

They have also been endowed with three bulls, sixty cows, twenty calves, two rams, twelve lambs, two goats and seventy chickens. With this endowment, we have the confidence that the next time we are in this neck of the woods, we shall find them to have doubled or even tripled what they have today. We actually expect to find meat from this farm on the shelves of Pick ‘n Pay, Shoprite/Checkers, Woolworths and other meat outlets.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I would like to remind the Maile Trust that livestock loans have now been included as an additional Micro-Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa (Mafisa) product and that the uptake will commence from April 2008. That is in case they would like to increase their current stock. Of course this is also dependent on whether there is enough grazing for extra livestock.

Honourable MEC, it is my contention that skills and good management are the pillars of running any successful enterprise. I am sure assistance in that regard would be forthcoming from your department. The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) can also assist in this regard.
Today I am also lunching the Land Rights Awareness Campaign whose slogan is: LAND RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS. This campaign is a call to all stakeholders, farmers, NGO’s, CBO’s, farm dwellers and workers that government has put in place a legislative framework to deal with issues of tenure security on farms and to regulate relationships between farm owners and farm dwellers. It is always disturbing to hear of continued cases of illegal evictions. The main objectives of this campaign is to raise the public awareness on land rights issues and to encouraged the stakeholder participation in dealing with land tenure issues.

Our history of the dispossessions changed the indigenous people of these areas into farm dwellers and workers when the farms were created. It is known that most of you have never been anywhere else but were born on these properties and now find yourselves landless. This is a product of many years of conquest, legislations and other measures by the previous undemocratic governments and as farm dwellers and workers you find yourselves in exploitative situations entirely dependant on farm owners. With this Land Rights Awareness Campaign I say let us talk and find solutions together and respect the rule of law and as one message of this campaign indicates “STOP ILLEGAL EVICTION”. There will be no stability on farms if there is no acknowledgement of this terrible history and move towards the recognition of tenure rights through observance of the legal framework that this government has put in place.
Programme Director, through the Land Rights Awareness Campaign I hope to increase access to Department of Land Affairs by people faced with problems of insecure tenure. In this regard a call centre with a toll free number **0800 00 7095** has been set up. This number is also being displayed on banners around this tent, write down the number and phone the department when faced with an eviction threat.

Programme Director; further assistance, around the land rights is the appointment of two service providers by the department who will be responsible for the provision of legal representation and mediation services for people facing land rights violations and evictions. I therefore encourage the use of these services than to resort to illegal and other forms of land rights violations. To illegally evict means the total disrespect of the rule of law and the government will not tolerate that and or take any responsibility for retaliatory attacks.

*Business Unusual: Let us all put our hands on deck to speed land reform*

I THANK YOU