



agriculture & rural development

Department:
agriculture
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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SPEAKING NOTES FOR MEC FOR KZN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA AT THE EVENT TO HANDOVER FINANCIAL COMPENSATION TO LAND CLAIMANTS FROM THE GLENCOE COMMUNITY, 10 OCTOBER 2015

Program Director and KwaZulu-Natal Land Claims Commissioner, Advocate Bheki Mbili

Umzinyathi District Council Speaker, Councillor S Chambule

Umzinyathi Exco member, Councillor L Ngubane

Endumeni Mayor, Cllr T Mahaye

Nquthu Mayor, Cllr EN Molefe

Msinga Mayor, Cllr FJ Sikhankane

Umvoti Mayor, Cllr TC Ngubane

Councillor L Mbhele

All Councillors Present

Leadership from Political Parties

Ms N. Sibisi and other representatives for the Glencoe Land Claimants Committee,

Provincial and Local Officials

Families of the Glencoe Land Claimants

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today is a happy occasion as the current democratic government has made good on its promise and is giving out financial compensation of over R50 million to 522 land claimants here in Glencoe.

While this is a joyful event, I cannot help feeling a sense of sadness at all that has been lost over the years. For me the biggest loss, not just to you as a

community, but to South Africa as whole, is how these forced removals caused a breakdown in good race relations. Your families were moved in accordance with the Group Areas Development Act of 1957. Historians tell us that this Act was passed to put in place a critical pillar of apartheid which was to promote and maintain racial segregation in South Africa. Today we are paying the price of this Act. Our communities still live mainly in racially zoned areas, we remain a divided nation and strangers to each other. We continue to face the enormous task of rebuilding and repairing race relations in this country.

The Glencoe community before removals consisted of Blacks, Whites and Indians living side by side and harmoniously as neighbours. The Land Claims Commission researchers who worked on verifying the claims were struck by the stories of how well everyone got along with each other.

Your children played together, you helped each other in times of hardship and at the same time you respected each other's space and culture. There were prosperous black landowners in the community who enjoyed occupational land and grazing rights. They planted crops, fruit and vegetables and were able to supply the local market. They also had extensive livestock herds which made them economically independent.

All of this came to an end in 1961, when the then State President Mr C R Swart declared Glencoe a White Group Area. Blacks, Indians and Coloureds had to vacate the land.

Just imagine, by the stroke of a pen the lives of more than 500 tenants and 350 former land owners were disrupted and racial harmony was dealt a bitter blow. As I said in my opening remarks, we are still paying the price of that loss as we struggle to get to know each other again.

There were other losses suffered as a result of these forced removals. These were the loss of dignity and livelihoods. There is currently ongoing discussion in various forums about the need for more Black farmers and entrepreneurs. Looking back at the landowners of Glencoe serves as a reminder that there was once a thriving farming and entrepreneurial spirit in Black communities.

This too was lost as people were stripped of their livelihoods. In addition to losing a place that you called home, you were forced to sell your livestock at a loss, because you had no land where you were moved to.

The Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA) has described forced removals as having enormous psychological, social and economic effects on people and communities. It said and I quote: "People not only had to leave the land and homes that they had been living in for generations, but they were often moved to places with almost no facilities and with much further to travel to their places of employment. Part of the brutality of the removals policy was the often appalling conditions in the relocation sites."

This is what happened here in Glencoe, both landowners and tenants were taken to Sithembile township, where the plots were so small that people could no longer grow food to feed their own families. Landowners were promised better land but this did not happen. Instead the big GG trucks just dumped people and their belongings outside Glencoe. As I said cattle were impounded or sold at a loss. All of this led to a loss of farming skills.

It is a joke that the place that the Indian community was forced to move to was named "Paradise," by the authorities of the time. In fact they had left paradise where they had their large houses and big land for cultivation and were forced to move to smaller properties which meant that extended families could no longer live together.

This is a celebratory event, but we would be doing a grave injustice to the older generation of the community, who experienced first-hand the pain of forced removal. As I have often said, our children need to know this history to appreciate the freedom that we enjoy today.

I want to thank the Land Claims Commission for the hard work that went into getting redress for the people of Glencoe. Officials from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform undertook a number of comprehensive name verification exercises to determine the correct number of claimants. Their research revealed that about 1300 former Glencoe tenants and landowners were affected by the dispossessions and this was in the period between 1965 and 1976.

The settlement of this latest claim follows two earlier settlements. The KZN Land Claims Commission had already approved and settled part of the Glencoe Claim in 2007 and 2011. In 2007, financial compensation was paid to 320 tenants who were moved from Glencoe. They were paid out over R11million. In 2011, more than R13 million was paid out to 133 former Glencoe land owners. Together, this amounted to a pay out of over R25million.

The KwaZulu-Natal Land Claims Commission continued with the verification of the outstanding claims. That process was successfully completed and today we have gathered here today the families of the 522 claimants who together will receive financial compensation that amounts to 50 million 300 thousand and 964 Rand (R50 300 964).

This shows that the current South African democratic government is committed to ensure that there is redress for families of land dispossessions.

The Government is also committed to non-racialism and reconciliation and to repair the damage caused by Legislation such as the Group Areas Act, which isolated communities in racial zones. This year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Charter. The opening lines of the Charter says that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, both black and white. The South African Constitution continues from the Freedom Charter and the introduction or preamble says: We, the people of South Africa, Recognise the injustices of our

past; Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land; Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity...

Enjoy the rest of the celebrations!

I thank you!