

REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, REV. MUSA ZONDI

GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE 18-MONTH NQF LEVEL 4 LEARNERSHIP PROGRAMME IN POWER & TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLE MANUFACTURING AND PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY

2 DECEMBER 2025

MAYVILLE, DURBAN

Programme Director;

Our Learnership Program Partners – Mwanga Africa Cables and South Ocean Electrical Wire Company (SOEW);

Leaders of Industry;

Representatives from the Training Authority and our academic partners;

Distinguished Guests;

Families and friends of the graduates;

And most importantly, our graduates;

Good afternoon!

Today is a proud moment for the Province of KwaZulu-Natal as we celebrate the graduation of a cohort of young people who have completed an intensive 18-month NQF Level 4 Learnership Programme in Power and Telecommunications Cable Manufacturing and Production Technology.

This is not merely a graduation ceremony but a powerful demonstration of what targeted skills development, meaningful partnerships and youth commitment can achieve.

This cohort graduates at a time when South Africa is accelerating its efforts to strengthen energy security, expand telecommunications infrastructure, and build a resilient manufacturing base.

Their qualification therefore places them at the centre of these national priorities.

The sectors that the graduates will be entering into - power cable manufacturing, telecommunications, and advanced production technology are critical to our economic growth trajectory.

As the country expands its renewable energy generation capacity, demand for locally manufactured transmission and distribution components continues to rise.

The growth of fibre networks, 5G expansion, smart cities and digital connectivity requires high-quality telecom cables manufactured by skilled professionals like these graduates.

As a province, KZN is positioning itself as a manufacturing and industrial hub, and these skills support our re-industrialisation plans under the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy and the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery initiatives.

This learnership programme is therefore more than capacity building. It is a strategic investment in economic competitiveness, industrial resilience and youth inclusion.

Allow me to acknowledge the training partners, host companies (South Ocean Electrical Wire Company (SOEW) and Mwanga Africa Cables), the SETA, mentors and workplace supervisors who opened their facilities and invested in the development of these learners.

Your commitment reflects the spirit of public-private collaboration we aim to strengthen through our Jobs and Skills agenda for KwaZulu-Natal.

This programme stands as a model for:

- Aligning industry-specific skills with real economic opportunities;
- Preparing young people for manufacturing careers through practical exposure;
- Creating a talent pipeline for sectors facing technical skills shortages;
- And enabling inclusive participation in the fourth industrial revolution.

To our graduates:

You have demonstrated resilience, discipline, technical competence, and the ability to adapt to a demanding environment. You have proven that with the right support, young people can excel in specialised, high-value industrial sectors.

Many of you have had to balance family responsibilities, financial pressures and long hours of both theory and practical training. Yet you persevered.

Your success today opens the door to careers in:

- Cable manufacturing and production operations;
- Quality assurance and testing;
- Telecommunications network support;
- Energy infrastructure manufacturing;
- And industrial process control and production optimisation.

This also opens the door for you to continue studies in engineering, quality management, or production technology at any of the TVETs. Most importantly, this qualification opens the door for you to enter the workforce immediately. Wherever the path leads, carry forward the discipline and values that brought you here.

As the Provincial Government, our priority is to continue expanding opportunities that prepare young people for industry-led, future-fit jobs.

This includes:

- Supporting localisation in the energy and cable manufacturing sectors;
- Promoting technology-driven manufacturing;
- Leveraging SEZs and industrial parks for training pathways;
- Strengthening the pipeline of artisans, technicians and production specialists;
- And ensuring skills development programmes lead to real employment outcomes.

These graduates represent the kind of workforce that will build KwaZulu-Natal's next generation of infrastructure and industrial capabilities.

So, to the graduates: Your journey does not end today. It begins.

Let this achievement be the foundation for lifelong learning, for curiosity, for innovation, and for leadership. You carry the hopes of your families, your communities and this province.

To the partners: Thank you for believing in the potential of our youth and for investing in programmes that create real and lasting impact.

To everyone gathered here: Let us continue to work together to build a KwaZulu-Natal where skills lead to jobs, innovation drives growth, and young people are active architects of our modern industrial economy.

Congratulations to the graduates.

We are proud of you.

Go out and shape the future of this province and our country.

Thank you.