

Santam Cape Argus Ukuvuka Operation Firestop

Second Anniversary event Thursday 21 February 2002 08h30

Notes for speech by Minister Ronnie Kasrils

(Estimated length 18 minutes)

Salutations

Opening comments

I would like to communicate three key “take home messages”

1. The partnerships and collaboration showcased here today are demonstrating impressive delivery
2. Short term private public sector partnerships (PPP) are demonstrating considerable potential for addressing a number of the challenges of South Africa
3. It is appropriate to salute and celebrate the partners for without their collaboration and contributions, these achievements would not have been possible.

- 1. The partnerships and collaboration showcased here today are demonstrating impressive delivery**

Fires

- We have not had any devastating fires along the Table Mountain chain since those of January 2000.

There are various reasons for this, but undoubtedly a major reason has been the way in which Ukuvuka has helped to unite the previously disparate fire-fighting capacities of the various organizations in the area, and the preventative work that has taken place.

- Good progress has been made with clearing firebelts.
- 85% of the Cape Peninsula National Park's planned firebelts have been cleared. Only 27% of the firebelts on privately owned land have been cleared and these areas will receive focussed attention in the remainder of the campaign
- The hazard areas that are a priority for clearing, have been determined. The regular clearing of the 3367 ha identified will "fireproof" the urban edge.
- Satisfactory progress has been made in clearing invading alien plants from areas that are a fire hazard

66% of property managed by CPNP has been cleared. Again the privately owned land will receive focussed attention as only 14% of the hazardous areas have been cleared.

We are still at risk, and it may be asking too much to expect that we will not face a serious fire before the end of the four-year period of the Campaign. But it nevertheless remains a remarkable achievement (one need only look at the recent devastating fires around Sydney, to know why we need to make sure that Ukuvuka succeeds).

Post-fire rehabilitation

- All of the remedial work done by Ukuvuka and its partners has held up and there have been no major problems such as experienced after previous fires.

There is no doubt that we were lucky in the first winter after the January 2000 fires, in that the rains were very accommodating of our emergency rehabilitation efforts. But

the rains toward the end of this, the second winter, were among the highest ever recorded in Cape Town during. It is a true testimony to the professionalism and determination of those who undertook the remedial work particularly the South Peninsula Administration. Unlike the still-real risk of further fires, we can be fairly confident that we have turned a corner with respect to post-fire rehabilitation.

Protecting vulnerable communities from fire

- The reduction in shacks lost to fire in the Joe Slovo settlement, has been among the most spectacular of Ukuvuka's early achievements.

There has been an over 90% reduction in loss of dwellings, compared to the 1999/2000 period. When one considers that these are people who have so little - and have no insurance, no savings, limited means by which to rescue their belongings, and who are so often the victims of rent-lords and loan-sharks once fires have occurred - it is a minor miracle. What is almost more important, and so inspiring, has been the way in which the fire professionals in the City of Cape Town have done a 180-degree shift. Once defensive and demoralized about dealing with informal settlement fires, they are now proactive and positive. It is their success. Cape Town is now set to roll out the Joe Slovo model in other poorer settlements. Imizamo Yethu in Hout Bay is next in line.

Poverty relief and training

- Up to the end of January 2002 over 71 000 person-days of employment had been generated on Ukuvuka funded projects.

- All 10 of the small entrepreneur groups that work on alien clearing (known as the collectives) are still functioning 18 months after the start of the initiative.

With the failure rate of new businesses this is encouraging. Far more encouraging is the fact that 2 of the collectives, are currently employing an additional 55 casual labourers. This represents an employment leverage of 275%! The Park is ensuring that there is a steady stream of work for which collectives can tender and this is what is making this truly encouraging employment statistic possible.

The challenges are still huge. Encouraging though these employment statistics are, there are significant problems of substance abuse and sexual abuse of women with which such initiatives are confronted. These will take far longer than the remaining 2 years and the resources of one single initiative such as the Ukuvuka Campaign, to address.

Not included in the employment figures already mentioned, is the major initiative on the Noordhoek wetlands. This is currently training some 600 people over the 3 months of the project. In future, the amount of work required to maintain the fire belts as well as the on-going alien clearing in the Peninsula, will ensure a demand for some time to come, for the skills that are being developed.

2. Short term private public sector partnerships (PPP) are demonstrating increasing potential for addressing the challenges of South Africa

At last year's anniversary event I mentioned that the Ukuvuka type short term PPP might be applied to addressing other challenges. The particular challenge on the forefront of my mind

at that time was cholera. The lessons learned in the ensuing year suggest even more strongly that this institutional form holds great potential for addressing challenges, especially those relating to behaviour change.

- The short term nature of the PPP means that it provides “a space” and resources to test innovative approaches to problems.

What I mean by this “space” is that established institutions especially in the public sector, are generally risk averse- and appropriately so. A short term PPP can provide a “safe” testing ground for innovation. If an initiative succeeds, the permanent institutional partner can take the kudos and incorporate the innovation into their standard practice. If it fails, the PPP is there to absorb any negative reaction such as blame, embarrassment or opprobrium.

The City of Cape Town’s Fire Services and Disaster Management quickly learned how to use this “safe space” to test out initiatives. One that stands out is the Fire and Life Safety education project. The immediately positive response to the first small presentation at Navy week in April 2001 showed the enormous potential of the approach. By June 2001, at the City’s Youth Environmental Week, Noddy the converted fire education engine, was launched. 10 000 children were exposed to messages such as “Stop, Drop and Roll” “Crawl low under smoke and go.go.go!” “In any emergency phone 107”. Not only that, the initiative was reported to have created great interest and enthusiasm among many of the staff of the Fire Services for an approach to fires that included prevention as well as suppression. The initiative’s long term success is assured as it has the support of the Fire Chiefs and a commitment has been made to create new posts for Fire and Life Safety Officers. From test to new

structures in less than one year is hugely encouraging and the Fire Services are to be congratulated.

- The short term nature of the PPP also means that it is less likely to establish major “turf” issues.

The PPP can therefore play a role to bring together institutions to address an issue. One example of where Ukuvuka is performing this function is related to burning permits. The large amount of alien clearing has create fuel loads that must be reduced along the natural interface with the City. A diverse range of institutions and players need to work together. Different pieces of legislation need to be considered carefully to find an effective solution. Ukuvuka has created the forum in which this is currently happening.

- The decision making structures and processes of the PPP allow for swifter responses than is the norm for government. This give a flexibility and a way of increasing effectiveness.

I will watch future developments with keen anticipation.

3. **It is appropriate to salute and celebrate the partners for without their collaboration and contributions, these achievements would not have been possible.**

None of these achievements would be possible without the support of the full range of partners in the Campaign. I would once again like to give great credit to the sponsors Santam, Total, Nedbank, the City of Cape Town and the Cape Argus. Those of you in the private

sector are all too aware of the time that it takes to start a new venture from scratch. I am told that 18 months to 2 years is a norm. There is no doubt that there is significant delivery on the ground in the Campaign. With this foundation built, the Campaign is now focussing on communicating widely and building its “brand”. To play with the bi-lingual pun, this is intended burn itself into the awareness of a far wider group than reached to date.

It is recognised that Ukuvuka has been under-communicating about the delivery that has already occurred. One of the lessons of the last year is that there is so little experience within both the private and public sectors on how to optimise and leverage a short term PPP that is focussed on behaviour change. Currently, considerable effort is going into finding the “added-value” for the sponsors, particularly those in the private sector.

I would like also to acknowledge the energetic work and support of the implementing agents, the City of Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula National Park. Some of the results of their collaboration will be evident in the field trips that follow.

Thank you too, to the wider range of supporters, the National departments of Water Affairs and Forestry, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Working for Water, the Western Cape Province as well as private sector service providers such as PricewaterhouseCoopers, Jan S de Villiers. All these and many others, have played their part in contributing to this vibrant initiative.

A very special thank you to the Navy’s collaboration with Ukuvuka and particularly the contribution from the Africa Band today. I think you will all agree that they have lent great style and flair to the morning and I would like to take this opportunity to

congratulate them on their recent highly successful and much acclaimed performances in Germany.

Finally I have the pleasure of a surprise thank you and presentation to a member of the Ukuvuka team whose full time involvement with the Campaign comes to an end today. One of the many marks that she has left on the Campaign is the shaping of this anniversary event. I would like to mention one particular aspect. Training opportunities for 74 unemployed people have been provided by the event showing the Campaign's commitment to assist in whatever way possible to make a difference to people's lives. The enthusiasm and excitement of the trainees has been heartwarming. The performers - the Ocean View Orkes, the Gospel Singers, and the dancers - have had the benefit of some training by a professional choreographer. The caterer has trained a small group to assist with the preparation of the food. Some of the assistants are graduates of the Noordhoek Valley Training Centre. We hope that the relationships built will lead to future opportunities for these people.

In conclusion, I am greatly encouraged by what *Ukuvuka at work in partnership* has delivered to date. I look forward to the next two anniversary events and what is still to come.

I would now ask Teri Kruger to come forward and receive a small token of appreciation.

(Minister, we will arrange a whimsical gift of a toy 4x4 vehicle – which was her tongue in cheek request! She was given a more substantial gift by the staff at a previous event).

