

SPEECH BY THE MEC FOR EDUCATION, MR ABRAHAM VOSLOO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE NORTHERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, HANLEY GROUP AND CISCO TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday, 5 August 2026

Protea Hotel Big Hole, Kimberley

Programme Director

Representatives of Cisco South Africa;

Leadership of the Hanley Group;

Senior officials of the Northern Cape Department of Education;

Teacher Unions;

Distinguished guests;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is a great honour to address this auspicious occasion as we formalise a strategic partnership between the Northern Cape Department of Education, Hanley Group and Cisco Technology through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

Today's signing of the Memorandum of Understanding is about making a commitment to the young people of the Northern Cape. It is about investing in their future, equipping them with the skills required to participate meaningfully in a rapidly changing world and ensuring that no learner is left behind as the global economy becomes increasingly digital.

The Northern Cape Department of Education firmly believes that quality education is the most powerful instrument for transforming lives, reducing inequality and creating opportunities for sustainable economic growth. Our responsibility extends beyond preparing learners to pass examinations. We must prepare them to become

innovators, problem-solvers, entrepreneurs and responsible citizens who are equipped to thrive in the digital age. This partnership with Cisco and Hanley Group represents another important milestone in that journey.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The vision that guides us as a province is clearly articulated in the **Northern Cape Growth and Development Plan**, which recognises education, innovation, digital transformation and skills development as essential drivers of inclusive economic growth and social development. The Growth and Development Plan calls on all sectors of society to work together to build the human capital required to unlock the province's economic potential.

Today's partnership is a practical demonstration of that vision in action. By bringing globally recognised digital education into our schools, we are creating opportunities for learners to acquire the knowledge and competencies required in sectors such as information technology, renewable energy, mining innovation, agriculture, engineering and entrepreneurship industries that are critical to the future growth of our province.

This initiative also gives practical expression to the aspirations of South Africa's **National Development Plan (NDP) 2030**. The NDP reminds us that education, skills development and innovation are among the country's most powerful instruments for eliminating poverty and reducing inequality. It envisages an education system that equips young people with the capabilities needed to participate confidently in the economy of the future.

The Plan further recognises that South Africa's competitiveness depends on producing graduates who possess critical thinking, digital literacy, problem-solving abilities and technical skills that meet the demands of a modern economy.

As government, we are therefore called upon not only to expand access to education but to improve the quality and relevance of that education. This Memorandum of Understanding responds directly to that national imperative.

Through this partnership, Cisco Networking Academy courses will be introduced into our Smart-Ready Schools, giving learners access to internationally recognised digital learning opportunities while strengthening the teaching of Computer Applications Technology, Information Technology, STEM subjects and Life Orientation.

Equally important, this initiative aligns with the priorities outlined in the **Basic Education Sector Plan 2025–2030**, which places strong emphasis on improving learning outcomes, integrating digital technologies into teaching and learning, strengthening teacher professional development and preparing learners with future-focused competencies.

The Sector Plan recognises that digital transformation is no longer optional, it is fundamental to building a modern and responsive education system.

Today's agreement therefore supports the implementation of national education priorities by strengthening digital learning ecosystems, expanding access to quality digital content and investing in educator capacity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One of the defining features of this partnership is our commitment to a multi-certification model for learners. Our vision is that a learner should graduate from school not only with a National Senior Certificate, but also with internationally recognised industry certifications that enhance their employability and expand their opportunities for further education and lifelong learning.

This represents a significant shift in how we prepare young people for success. It means that learners in the Northern Cape will have the opportunity to acquire practical skills in networking, cybersecurity, digital literacy and emerging technologies while they are still at school.

These are not simply academic achievements. They are real-world competencies that employers increasingly value across every sector of the economy. Equally significant is the investment we are making in our educators. No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers.

For this reason, two Teacher Champions from every participating school will receive specialised instructor training, internationally recognised certification and ongoing

professional support. These educators will become leaders of innovation within their schools, ensuring that digital education becomes embedded in classroom practice and reaches every learner.

I wish to commend Cisco for its longstanding global commitment to expanding access to technology education and for recognising the enormous potential that exists within the Northern Cape.

We are equally grateful to the Hanley Group for partnering with us as the implementation and Academy Support Centre. Their expertise in teacher development, programme implementation and learner support will be instrumental in ensuring the success and sustainability of this initiative.

This partnership is a powerful example of what can be achieved when government and the private sector work together with a common purpose.

Collectively, we are investing in people.

We are investing in knowledge.

We are investing in innovation.

Most importantly, we are investing in hope.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is already transforming the way we live, work and learn.

Artificial intelligence, cloud computing, cybersecurity, data science and digital networking are no longer technologies of the future, they are realities of the present.

If our learners are to compete successfully in the global economy, they must possess the skills that these new industries demand.

Our responsibility is therefore clear. We must ensure that geography does not determine opportunity.

Whether a learner comes from Kimberley, Kuruman, Upington, De Aar, Springbok, Calvinia or one of our many rural communities, they deserve access to the same world-class learning opportunities. The digital divide must never become an opportunity divide.

Today's agreement represents another important step towards building an inclusive education system where every learner has the opportunity to develop the skills required to succeed in the economy of tomorrow.

The true success of this partnership will not be measured simply by the number of schools participating or the number of courses delivered.

It will be measured by the young learner who discovers a passion for technology.

It will be measured by the educator who inspires the next generation of innovators.

It will be measured by graduates who find employment, create businesses and contribute meaningfully to the economic development of the Northern Cape and South Africa.

As we sign this Memorandum of Understanding today, let us remember that we are not merely launching another programme.

We are opening doors.

We are expanding possibilities.

We are building futures.

Together, let us ensure that this partnership becomes a model for collaboration, innovation and educational excellence.

Together, let us prepare a generation that is not only ready for the future, but capable of shaping it.

I thank Cisco and the Hanley Group for their partnership, our educators for their dedication and our learners for inspiring us every day to build a better education system.

Working together, we will continue to build a capable, skilled and digitally empowered generation that will lead the Northern Cape and South Africa into the future.

I thank you.