

## RURAL SAFETY SUMMIT 27-28 JUNE 2022

Thank you for the opportunity: Programme Directors

Greetings to the Minister : Honourable Bheki Cele

Deputy Minister : Honourable Cassele Mathale

MEC : Honourable KW Bulwane

National Police Commissioner : General Masemola

All Police Leadership

Business Leaders and

Labour Representatives

All interest groups represented here today

Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocols observed.

And fellow comrades one gentlemen says that all comrades are criminals not the comrades that I work with they are not criminals. If you are looking for criminals, you will find them at Zondo Commission report, but to be judiciously correct, they are suspects!

The summit comes at a time when the country is in a grip of high crime levels. Contact crimes are on the rise. The rural communities are not spared the wrath of the criminals. Those that cannot defend themselves are at the worst disadvantage. Women and children are victims of GBV and unsafe working and living conditions on the farms and rural Areas. Rural communities are far from government amenities and services, thus making them vulnerable to acts of criminality. The unemployment levels are also very high thus escalating the situation in rural areas. Looking at inputs made in the past summits, it is clear that progress has been very slow in terms of implementation of the resolutions taken.

The importance of labour on the farms is underestimated however, it is of paramount importance. So is the safety and security of families in those areas. When the farmworkers lose their employment, their continued occupation of dwellings on the farms gets criminalized. We call them dwellings because of the manner in which they are constructed. The family unit gets broken as the farm owners want to evict the sacked employee, irrespective of the vulnerability of the family. Schooling of the children gets interrupted. Farmworkers and their families are thrown by the roadside. There is no protection for the farmworkers. Farmers with deep pockets use the criminal justice system against those families.

The safety of the farming community must be indiscriminate. The police must work even handedly when dealing with criminality in the farming and the rural areas. Visibility and responsibilities of the

police must be elevated. Gatherings like this are very important in that they create awareness about the lived experiences of those communities. The test is in the implementation of the decisions and the resolutions taken. That is where the role of the local Police becomes important. They need to be informed and be empowered to carry out the resolutions of this gathering and similar gatherings. Rural Safety must be a priority in order for the country to have sustainable food production and tourism.

OUR EXPECTATION FROM THIS SUMMIT IS THAT WE WILL get clear implementation program on the issues raised in the previous summit and we should have a clear roadmap on issues that will emanate from this summit as well.

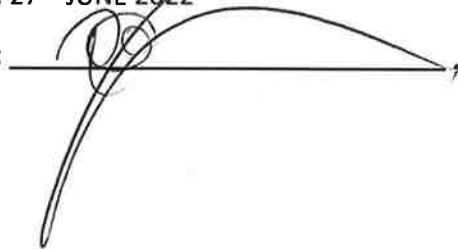
AS FAWU WE STAND READY TO SUPPORT ALL INITIATIVES THAT SEEK TO PROTECT THE LIVELIHOODS OF THE FARMING AND RURAL COMMUNITIES. WE CALL UPON ALL PARTICIPANTS IN THIS SUMMIT TO JOIN FAWU IN MAKING SURE THAT FOOD PRODUCTION IS NOT COMPROMISED.

I THANK YOU ALL.

SPEECH BY : Stephen Poonyane

DATE : 27<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2022

SIGNATURE :

A handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive, starting with a large loop and ending with a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the left.