

ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, MR. CHUPU MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNUAL OPENING OF THE PROVINCIAL HOUSE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS.

26 April 2019

Your Majesties and Royal Highnesses – our Kings;

MEC for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlement and Traditional Affairs;

Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and members of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders;

Chairpersons and members of the Local Houses of Traditional Leaders in Limpopo;

Leaders of Provincial Houses of Traditional Leaders from other provinces;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Let me start off by extending my appreciations to the House for inviting me to this august occasion, marking the Annual Opening of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders.

It is always an honour and special privilege for me to speak in this House.

You would know that the Opening of this august House takes place just a day before we celebrate the National Freedom Day.

As you know, the National Freedom Day is the commemoration of the first democratic elections held in South Africa on 27 April 1994. These were the first post-apartheid national elections to be held in South African where anyone could vote regardless of race. Prior to this, during apartheid, racial segregation which was enforced by the National Party, prevented any kind of inter-racial activity.

We all know that the 1994 elections resulted in the election of Nelson Mandela as the first President of a free and democratic South Africa.

We also know how close the institution of traditional leadership was to President Mandela. Perhaps, this was partly because President Mandela was himself a member of the Thembu Royal House.

Above this, we also know that his organisation, the ANC was an organisation which was founded by kings and chiefs.

The freedom and democracy we are celebrating tomorrow would not have been achieved without the active participation of our kings and chiefs in the freedom struggle.

Many of our traditional leaders lost their birthright to chieftaincy and kingship because of their participation in the freedom struggle. The loss resulted in many being degraded to Kapteins, and other derogatory titles.

You would agree with me that most of the problems we are experiencing today relating to traditional leadership dispute are a direct result of the work of apartheid government.

It is therefore not by accident that the head office of the ruling party in this country bears proudly bears the name of a Chief. That is a living tribute to the role of traditional leaders in our struggle for freedom.

Chief Albert Luthuli was amongst the relentless freedom fighters that chose death over the throne. Because of his dedication to the struggles of the African people, he was awarded the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize for his role as the leader of ten million Africans in the non-violent struggle against apartheid.

He was the first African and individual outside of Europe and the Americas to be awarded this prestigious accolade in Oslo, Norway, formally on 10 December 1961. His famous statement “the road to freedom is via the cross” clearly depicted how much he valued freedom. That is the freedom we are celebrating tomorrow.

As traditional leaders of today, you can be proud of the role which has been played by your forefathers in the attainment of our freedom.

We indeed owe our freedom to leaders such as Makhado, Ngungunyane, Sekhukhune, Ratshatsha Malebogo and many others.

It is precisely for this reason that we become very worried when there is instability in some traditional authorities.

The recent judgement of the Supreme Court of Appeal around the Vhavenda Kingship has had all of us worried.

We have said it in the past and we will continue to say that it is not for government to appoint Chiefs or Kings.

It is also clearly not the mandate of the courts to appoint traditional leaders. Traditionally, the system of traditional leadership has had durable succession mechanisms in place. These are the mechanisms which must be utilised to make such important determinations.

However, we live in a constitutional democracy with the laws that empowers the courts to intervene where we are unable to resolve our own issues. However, it is my view that such interventions by the courts are not always ideal.

I am confident that the issue of the Vhavenda Kingship will be finalised soon and in a manner that best serves the Vhavenda traditional communities.

Honourable Chairperson;

We cannot over emphasise the role of traditional leaders in our democratic setup.

I mean every word when I say that as Traditional Leaders, you continue to be critical role players in the reconstruction and development of our country.

It is in this context that we continue to work with the traditional leadership, through this House and other forums to propel the development of our Province.

We are currently providing support to a total of 2111 headmen/women, 185 traditional councils, 02 Kingships and 01 Queenship as enjoined by chapter 12 our Constitution.

Since 2015 we have also purchased 175 vehicles to be utilized by Senior Traditional Leaders in the Province.

In the past 5 years, we managed to build eleven offices for traditional councils in the Province. In the next Financial Year, we have set aside an amount of R70 million to build additional seven offices for traditional councils.

Working together with the National Government, we are engaging traditional leadership to resolve issues relating to outstanding tools of trade.

We are once more thankful to the Kgatla Commission which was appointed in 2012 to deal with issues relating to disputes and claims of traditional leadership. The Commission has completed its work and we are implementing the recommendations.

The outstanding issues from the Commission will be addressed by the Office of the Premier, working together with the leadership of this House.

Through a cordial relationship between government and traditional leaders, Limpopo continues to be shinning model in the administration of the initiation schools.

As I said during the State of the Province Address, we have since adopted the Limpopo Initiation Schools Act of 2017 to regulate this ancient and sacred traditional practice of the African people.

Our work in this regard has inspired the National Government which is now in the process of developing a national legislation to regulate the management of traditional initiation.

The other issue which has caused unease amongst many of you has been the issue of SPLUMA legislation.

In this regard I am able to say that we have received your submissions which have already been encapsulated into the latest draft of the Bill. The bill is currently undergoing legislature process. I am confident that the final version of the Bill will be reflective of your submissions.

Chairperson;

Let me conclude by reiterating my appreciation for your invitation. More than anything, as government we remain humbled by your spirit of partnership and cooperation.

We wish you a fruitful and empowering sitting of the House.

Ndo livhuwa!

Inkomu!

Pula!