

ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, AMBASSADOR CHUPU STANLEY MATHABATHA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LIMPOPO TOURISM LEKGOTLA, HELD AT TIVEKA LODGE.

26 August 2021

Programme Director, Ntate Andrew Dipela;
MEC for LEDET, Ntate Thabo Mokone;
Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality;
Acting Executive Mayor of Polokwane Local Municipality;
Head of Department of LEDET;
Members of the Board of the Limpopo Tourism Agency;
Members of the Media;
Esteemed ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning!

Let me start by thanking all of you for such an overwhelming response to this Limpopo Tourism Lekgotla. Your presence here is highly valued and appreciated. This is indeed no ordinary meeting but a Lekgotla.

In an African tradition, we summon a Lekgotla when a community or society is besieged with challenges that require attention and resolution.

A Lekgotla is traditionally attended by select and revered members of the community or society. I have no doubt that delegates to this Lekgotla are equally revered and renowned practitioners in the space of tourism and economic development in general. We trust in your collective willingness and abilities to finding solutions that will propel our tourism sector to greater heights.

Like attendees of a Lekgotla in a traditional African community, you come to this meeting with valued knowledge and unmatched commitment to finding solutions to prevailing challenges.

Programme Director

The theme for this Lekgotla is advancing tourism growth through investment and partnerships. What is known is the fact that the growth we are all yearning for has been to a greater extent, impaired by the prevailing Covid-19 restrictions.

Covid-19 and its restrictions is our reality. Our plans and programs cannot ignore this reality. If we are to move beyond just a talk show, our planning must embrace this reality. It is an open secret that the tourism sector has been the hardest hit by this coronavirus pandemic. It is even worse for ourselves as Limpopo because tourism is a competitive edge for our provincial economy.

Limpopo has been doing very well with regard to both domestic and international travel. This is in part owed to our aggressive marketing campaign and strategies.

However, our performance in this sector is largely owed to the splendour of our natural beauty. The scenic beauty of Limpopo is unmatched, not only in this country but worldwide. The dramatic landscapes of our mountains, and the rivers – the inviting beauty of our flora and the rich diversity of our fauna remain without a true counterpart.

Limpopo is indeed a destination of choice for those who are serious about travel and leisure. Indeed, as I said in February during the State of the Province Address, the Tourism sector in our province has been growing and flourishing since 2015.

As a matter of fact, the tourism sector in Limpopo held poll position countrywide in domestic travels with approximately 22.2 million arrivals.

Limpopo has been competing at the top with regard to international travels.

As I have said, the impact of Covid-19 on our provincial economy was particularly devastating.

In response, as a Provincial Government we have been implementing a provincial tourism recovery plan which focus is:

To protect and maintain the provincial tourism market share and tourism infrastructure, and

To aggrievedly market Limpopo as a tourism destination of choice.

Programme Director

The greatest recovery plan we can ever implement in this sector and beyond, is achieving population immunity from Covid-19.

We can only achieve this if we get as many of our people to go out and vaccinate against Covid-19. Our National Government and our Provincial Government have released a quantum of resources to achieve this objective.

Our country is amongst the very few in the world with sufficient vaccine doses for its population.

The challenge is for all of us to go out and get out jabs.

This is an urgent thing to do if we are to recover the lost ground.

Tourism sector in this province and in our country can only go back to its former glory if the people embrace the urgency of vaccination.

We have seen in many countries across the globe lives returning almost back to normal because the people have embraced vaccination.

In many countries across Europe people are flocking back to sports stadiums and restaurants because they are fully vaccinated.

This is exactly what we need if our country is to go back to the pre-Covid-19 way of doing things.

We must, therefore as part of our recovery plans, urge our people to go out and vaccinate.

As delegates in this Lekgotla, we must lead from the front, we must parade our vaccination certificates so that the masses can follow our example.

We must do this so that our restaurants, lodges, hotels, resorts and other facilities can go back to full business.

Limpopo needs a fully functional tourism sector if our economy is to back to sound health.

Programme Director

As I have said in my introduction, I have full confidence in this Lekgotla and the delegates to this Lekgotla, to help us find solutions to the challenges in the sector.

Whereas some of the challenges came with Covid-19, there have been challenges before Covid-19.

We need to be honest and robust in interrogating the challenges in our tourism sector.

I know that part of these challenges include, the question of tourism infrastructure, the question of funding, marketing, support to SMMEs in the sector and attracting investments.

These challenges are not beyond our collective capacity to resolve. They are not insurmountable.

Program Director and our honourable MEC

Please allow me to take this opportunity to officially declare this Lekgotla open.
Let the festival of ideas ensue.

Let us breathe life to the commitment to grow our tourism industry, through investment attraction and partnerships.

I thank you!
Nda!
Inkomu!
Kea Leboga!