

**ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, AMBASSADOR  
CHUPU MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
HUMAN RIGHTS DAY CELEBRATION HELD AT  
MAKLEREKENG SPORTS GROUND.**

21 April 2017

Programme director, MEC Kgetjepe;

Members of our provincial legislature,

Members of Executive Council,

Representative of the Human Rights Commission,  
Commissioner Victor Mavhidula;

Executive Mayor, Stan Ramaila and all the Mayors and  
councillors present,

Director General of the Province, Ntate Nape Nchabeleng,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me join our Programme Director and start by welcoming all  
of you to this important celebration of our Human rights.

Today is a very important day in our country's national calendar – it is a day that belongs to all of us. The rights we are celebrating today are the rights that belong to every human being; Black or White; Citizens and non-citizens.

The Human Rights Day is a national day that is commemorated annually on 21 March to remind South Africans about the sacrifices which were made for us to attain the freedoms and democracy we are enjoying today.

This day provides us as a country with an opportunity to reflect on progress made in the promotion and protection of human rights.

This year we are celebrating under the theme that says: **“The Year of OR Tambo: Unity in Action in Advancing Human Rights”**

We call this year, the year of Oliver Tambo because 2017 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Oliver Reginald Tambo.

As you know, Oliver Tambo was a selfless servant of the people and an embodiment of the struggle for democracy, non-racialism, non-sexism and unity.

It is because of the sacrifices of leaders such as Oliver Tambo that we are able to enjoy democracy and celebrate human rights.

### **Programme Director;**

It is also important to remind ourselves about the origins of this day.

The period around 1960s were characterized by massive defiance and protest against apartheid and racism across the country. The people were tired about apartheid policies that dehumanized and stripped them of all their God-given human rights.

On 21 March 1960, the community of Sharpeville and Langa townships, like their fellow compatriots across the country, embarked on a protest march to protest against pass laws.

The apartheid police shot and killed 69 of the protesters at Sharpeville, many of them were shot at the back while fleeing. Many other people were killed in other parts of the country.

This tragedy came to be known as the **Sharpeville Massacre**. This brutal and barbaric killing of innocent people helped to

expose the apartheid government's violation of human rights to the whole world.

We commemorate this day as a way of paying tribute and honor all those who fought for our liberation and the rights we enjoy today.

**Programme Director;**

South Africa has one of the most progressive constitutions in the world.

The Constitution is the ultimate protector of our Human Rights, which were previously denied to the majority of our people under Apartheid.

We commemorate Human Rights Day to reinforce our commitment to the Bill of Rights as enshrined in our Constitution.

Our constitution provides that:

- Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.
- That everyone has inherent dignity and have their dignity respected and protected.

- That everyone has a right to freedom of movement and to reside anywhere in the country.
- That everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, and most importantly,
- That everyone has the right to life.

These are the rights that no one can ever take away from you.

Over and above these rights, our constitution recognizes another category of rights known as the **socio-economic rights**.

These are the right to education, right to housing, right to decent standard of living and the right to basic healthcare.

As the custodian of the democratic constitution, the ANC government has and must continue to commit more resources towards programmes that seek to promote and ensure access to these important basic rights.

This government has done a great work to advance our people's rights to decent housing, access to water, and access to quality education, social development and primary healthcare for everyone

Today more people have access to safe drinking water than ever before – there are still those few communities without proper access to water and the government is working hard to connect such communities with access to water.

This democratic government has electrified over 90% of households. Today there is electricity even in the most rural of our villages. Electricity is no longer an exclusive reserve of those in the big cities.

This government continues to build houses for the poor.

This government has invested billions of resources in the education of our children.

The government has been hard at work, building new schools, laboratories and libraries.

Thousands of school children in this province and throughout the country attend our No-Fee schools. On top of this, the government provides free meals for children in poorer schools.

**Programme Director;**

We must always remember that in the exercise of our rights we must respect the rights of others.

In the recent past we have seen ugly episodes of total disregard of the human rights of others by some amongst us who still yearn for the return of the days of apartheid.

In this province we had a man who drove over another human being crippling his legs.

We also had a man shot to death by a farmer who claims that he mistook that human being to a wild-pig.

As if this is not enough, we had another human being shot at with the shooter claiming that he thought that human being was a monkey.

These are painful episodes that are calculated in undermining the human dignity of our people; particularly Black people.

What is even more saddening is the recent remarks by some leaders of political parties who are now praising apartheid colonialism.

They are telling us that the same justice system that hanged Solomon Mahlangu and imprisoned Nelson Mandela for over 27 years on Robben Island should be celebrated as the beauty of colonialism.

This should not be accepted simply because it undermines the pain of our people.

It is for this reason that we should support the introduction of a legislation that will criminalise hate speech.

We cannot continue in a fashion where the victims of apartheid continue to be insulted and compared to animals without consequences.

It is on that reason that we commend the work being done by the Provincial Human Rights Commission. It's not an easy one, but together, we will continue to make sure our people's dignity is respected and protected.

**Programme Director;**

In conclusion, I want to wish all the people of Limpopo well in your celebration of this day, I am confident that you will celebrate peacefully and responsibly, remembering that tomorrow is still a day.

I thank you!