

***ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, MR CHUPU
STANLEY MATHABATHA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
SITTING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES.***

18 NOVEMBER 2016

Madam Chairperson of the NCOP,
His Excellency, the Honourable President of our country, Mr.
Jacob Zuma,
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of NCOP,
Premiers and MECs here present,
Members of Parliament and the National Council of
Provinces,
Members of Provincial Legislatures,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Limpopo is honoured by this special opportunity to share
with esteemed Members of the NCOP and the nation at
large about the progress that is taking place in our part of the
country.

Ours is indeed about working together, to deliver on the commitment to better the lives of our people.

The greatest weapon we have on our side is the unwavering support of our people.

This is the support we never take for granted.

The ever present support of our people is a fuel that powers our pace to deliver on the shared commitment of a better life for all.

Our collective experience has proved that the task of creating a better life for all our citizens is not an easy one; however, it is a task we have vowed never to betray.

We have over the past 21 years of our freedom and democracy worked harder to perfect the art of taking services to the people in order to help realise the dream of a better life for all.

We continue to do our work under very hostile conditions; mostly imposed on us from our ugly past.

Compounding this is the reality of limitation of resources.

Honourable President

We have been advised that the theme for this interactive session with our people is 'following up on our commitment to deliver quality education and ensure economic advancement of our people'.

I will indeed say a few words on behalf our Limpopo in line with this theme.

However, I understand that it is of national interest that I share with you developments relating to the dust that had characterised our province in the past few years.

Honourable Members would indeed be interested to know if the financial mismanagements that were almost synonymous with Limpopo are being addressed.

Over the past three years the provincial administration has done fairly well to rescue the province from total collapse.

Noting the progress that we have made, the AG said on Wednesday that **‘Limpopo registered a 26% improvement over the past three years’**.

He went further to acknowledge that the section 100(b) intervention of the past few years has been useful in stemming the tide of mismanagement in our province.

However, the Auditor General noted the need for our province to work harder in order to sustain what he called ***‘the huge improvements made in 2014-15 financial year’***.

Part of matters emphasised by the AG relating to our audit was the issue of high vacancy rate at strategic leadership level.

In this regard, I am able to report that we have already covered much ground.

Two months ago we appointed four Accounting Officers in the Departments of, Health, Education, Roads and Public Infrastructure and Social Development.

On Wednesday, as the AG was releasing his report, we were appointing the Accounting Officer for the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs.

We are also in a process to finalise the appointment of the Accounting Officer for the Department of Sport, Art and Culture.

In about two weeks we would have finalised the appointment of the Director General for the Province.

These appointments will go a long way in assisting to address some of the concerns raised by the AG.

We are also able to report that there has been improvement in the area of consequence management. Action is being taken against poor performance - this has led to officials bearing consequences for poor performance and transgressions.

Honourable Members;

We have indeed put all the energy and attention to ensure that the province radically cut fruitless and wasteful expenditure so that resources can be directed important areas such as education and economic development.

There is no doubt that we are on track towards fulfilling the dream of our forebears of ensuring that ***the doors of learning and culture shall be opened to all.***

In 2015 Limpopo alone registered an unprecedented student enrollment of 101 575 sitting for Grade 12 examinations, an increase of 39.2% from 2014.

The figures have increased this year.

This is a massive achievement, particularly for an under-resourced province such as ours.

This year we have put most of our attention and resources in the two underperforming Sekhukhune and Waterberg Districts.

Special attention has also been given to Vuwani area following the much publicised disruption of learning following the redetermination of municipal boundaries.

I can assure Honourable Members and national that Vuwani and the rest of Vhembe region will not disappoint.

You can be rest assured that; come the announcement of Grade 12 results, the Minister of Basic Education will be shaking hands with learners from that area.

Mr President;

The creation of a conducive environment for learning and teaching is also high on the agenda of our government.

To that end, we have prioritised addressing such critical issues as the inappropriate school infrastructure, the repairs to storm damaged schools, the provisioning of additional classrooms to areas experiencing growth, and the provisioning of water and sanitation in all our schools.

Over the past three years we have spent R2.9 billion on school infrastructure to address the areas I have already mentioned. We have also budgeted R2.4 billion over the next three years to continue with this infrastructure delivery work in our schools.

On higher education I am proud to announce that the idea of a medical school in Limpopo is no longer just a pipe-dream. It is a reality.

This medical school which is at University of Limpopo admitted its first group of 60 students at the beginning of this year.

As the provincial government, we have since offered these students full bursaries to the tune of R10 million for their studies.

Madam Chairperson;

Consistent with the National Development Plan, the year 2014 saw us here in Limpopo convening an all-inclusive provincial development summit to discuss and adopt Limpopo Development Plan.

The plan clearly defines and provides a framework for the economic growth and development agenda of our province.

Most importantly, it reflects our shared vision and strategic imperatives towards poverty reduction, elimination of social inequality and a creation of sustainable jobs in our province.

It is in this context that about two weeks ago we convened a Provincial Economic Summit to give more meaning to Limpopo Development Plan.

We have anchored the Limpopo Development Plan around mining, agriculture and tourism as strategic economic growth points and competitive advantages of our province.

The resolutions of this summit I am talking about are going to guide us on the route to industrialise through mineral beneficiation, development of agro-processing cluster, development of viable tourism offerings and logistics.

We can confirm that there are already significant number of economic projects and infrastructure investments that are being implemented in various regions in the province.

They include the Presidential Strategic Infrastructure Programme targeting both Waterberg and Sekhukhune District Municipalities, and the envisaged Special Economic Zones earmarked for implementation in both Greater Tubatse and Musina Local Municipalities.

In this regard, Honourable President we would like to take this opportunity to thank the Cabinet for positively considering our application for Musina to become a Special Economic Zone. It will really go a long way towards developing the economy of the country in that part of that part of the land.

Nevertheless, we would like to implore on you, Mr. President, to once again persuade the Cabinet to also consider Tubatse as an SEZ. Tubatse municipality has a huge economic potential to become the future **platinum production hub** of this country.

We continue to work in partnership with our social partners to place Limpopo on a higher economic development trajectory.

We are convinced that we are on a correct path and our people will harvest the fruits of our collective toil.

Once again, thank you very much for the privilege to speak to our people through this platform of the NCOP.

I Thank You