

**RESPONSE BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE
HONOURABLE CHUPU MATHABATHA TO THE SOPA
DEBATE OF 01 MARCH 2016**

03 March 2016

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker,

Members of the Executive Council,

Chief-Whip of the Majority Party,

Honourable Members of the House,

Leaders of Oppositions Parties,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first and foremost take this opportunity to thank all those members of the House who participated in the debate on the State of the Province.

I was particularly impressed by the dignified manner with which the debate was conducted.

The debate was indeed very robust, vibrant and truly enriching.

As the Provincial Executive Council, we place a higher premium on your comments and inputs.

I am also confident that the people in whose name you enjoy the privilege of being members of this august House would be pleased with how you seriously take your responsibilities.

As Honourable Mashamba said on Tuesday, ***'if we do not treat this House with dignity in the name of the people we serve, we will become irrelevant and this House will lose people's respect'***

Your criticisms, mainly constructive, your praises and recommendations will go a long way towards enriching and adding value to the plans and programmes of this government that I am privileged to lead.

Honourable members

The State of the Province Address remains a platform to report to the people about the progress we are making towards building a non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous South Africa.

It is an esteemed occasion we must use to communicate the policies, plans and programmes of government for the year ahead.

We must never at any stage be tempted to use the state of the province address, including its subsequent debate, for political point-scoring and grandstanding purposes.

Our people have given us a mandate to govern and represent them in this legislature. They are therefore having legitimate expectations for us to use this platform to account on how we are carrying out that mandate, nothing more nothing less.

It is in this context therefore that I agree with Honourable Mashamba when she cautioned us to rise above petty political differences, and instead do self introspection, be frank and critical about the performance government.

We must do this without allowing subjectivity to assume preponderance over objectivity.

Madam Speaker;

I also share the same sentiments with Honourable Mashamba when she said that our milestone achievements in improving the conditions living of the majority of our people over the past 22 years should not make us rest on our laurels.

For as long as we are confronted with the reality of a persisting and deep-seated triple crisis of poverty, unemployment and inequality, there is a course for the intensification of struggle.

Madam Speaker;

It is against this background that that I beg to differ with Honourable Mathebe who would want the public to believe that the State of the Province Address has become a rhetorical repetition of what was said in the previous years, without tangible progress and realistic programmes on changing the lives of the people

I do not believe that his observation can withstand the test of factual scrutiny.

We gave a detailed progress report on every commitment we made in our State of the Province address. We went further to outline the plans of the provincial government for the year 2016/17 and beyond.

Just to refresh your memory, On Friday I spoke about no less than 800 job beneficiaries of the R1.65 billion investment Mamba Cement Manufacturing Company in Thabazimbi.

I went further to mention that that about 50 South Africans will be trained in China on how to operate this type of a plant.

I reported to this House about the pending approval of SEZ application in Musina which would come with lot of incentives for business in that part of our province. These incentives, as I

said, will without doubt help grow the capacity of our Small and Medium Enterprises, let alone the creation of jobs for the unemployed.

I spoke at length about the progress we are registering in improving access to primary health in the province.

We have delivered on the promise to open a Medical School in this province. We went further to offer the first intake of students full comprehensive bursaries.

We are continuing to support our EMS with annual purchase of a fleet of ambulances.

We also announced that for the first time, Limpopo will have the long awaited Academic Hospital. The construction of this hospital will commence by no later than November this year.

Madam Speaker

I also reported about the progress we are making regarding the expenditure of Infrastructure Grants on the part of our municipalities. The evidence of this is the growing list of municipalities that are doing well in this regard.

On the performance of the provincial administration Honourable

Mathebe, I quoted the AG as having said that “***the Provincial Treasury and the Office of the Premier play a critical role in the drive towards clean administration***”.

So, if all these things that I have mentioned earlier and other strategic issues that are contained in SOPA such the ongoing construction of roads in our villages - - are just a rhetoric, repetition and lack of progress, then you and I honourable Mathebe have a completely different understanding.

I do not believe that you are part of those that Honourable Sebabi said that they deliberately undermine their God-given abilities to see and hear, merely to advance a political objective.

Perhaps the important question is who Ben Okri had in mind when he wrote that: “***We are listeners at the oracle. Some listen, but do not hear. Some hear but do not listen. Those who hear are touched and changed***”

Honourable Members

On Tuesday I met with the Provincial Auditor General to look into the municipal audit outcomes. Perhaps it would please this House that within the next fourteen days I will, together with the AG meet all municipal Mayors, Managers and CFOs to focus

on acceleration of operation clean audit campaign.

We agree Honourable Mathebe that we need to look into the performance and role of our State Owned Enterprises in our economy. It is for this reason that I announced the Provincial Economic Indaba to be held in May this year. Underpinning this Indaba will, amongst others, be the review of the role of SOEs in the mainstream economy of the province.

Madam Speaker;

I must also express disappointment at Honourable Mathebe's submission that our support to traditional leaders is merely an electioneering public relations gimmick.

A similar argument was canvassed by the DA last year when we announced a Medical Aid Scheme support for traditional Leaders.

Interestingly, the EFF has embraced this reactionary attitude against our traditional leaders.

I must reiterate that, we will not abandon our support to Traditional Leaders merely because it is an election year.

Chapter 12 of our internationally acclaimed democratic constitution enjoins us to support this institution, and we are therefore unwavering and unapologetic about our continued support to traditional leaders.

Honourable Onnicca Moloji reflected at length on matters of youth empowerment and development.

I can't agree more with Mme Moloji that the decision to build a theatre in Polokwane will serve the twin task of taking young people off the streets and at the same time create job opportunities for the majority of them who are unemployed.

As I said during the State of the Province Address, we have directed the Youth Directorate in the Office of the Premier to follow up and ensure the implementation of the resolutions you have referred to.

As we speak, the National Youth Development Agency, working in partnership with the Youth Directorate in the Office of the Premier, have entered into a memorandum of agreements with about 8 municipalities for the establishment of NYDA Consultative Offices in those municipalities.

This will make the services of NYDA even more accessible to our young people.

Honourable Shikhutji, in Thohoyandou, Thulamela, the NYDA is establishing a fully-fledged branch. This office will have the capacity to receive applications for loans and to process such applications. This will go a long way to assist small entrepreneurs in that municipality.

Contrary to what Honourable Shikhutji believes, the NYDA services and those of the Youth Directorate in the Office of the Premier are not offered along political lines.

The same should be said about wild allegations made by Honourable Mathebe that the School Nutrition Programme is used for other purposes than the primary reason of feeding our children, including the fact that it is being reviewed to be given to few companies.

We have corrected this anomaly of empowering the privileged few, and if any review will take place, it will be about how we empower our people through Cooperatives.

Honourable Smalle, the truth exists separate from our wishes, emotions, likes and dislikes. It is an independent phenomenon.

Employment from Stats SA Labour Force Survey says that, Limpopo has created 147 000 jobs in the year 2015. In the third quarter of 2015 alone, we have created no less 59 000 jobs.

In the whole country, we are in the third position after KZN and Gauteng in terms of job creation.

This is according to Statistics South Africa not the Office of the Premier as you want the public to believe.

Your statistics say that Limpopo has reduced the number of Bachelor passes, but statistics from the Department of Basic Education as verified by Umalusi tells a different story.

As I have said during the State of the Province Address, we have increased the number of learners with bachelor pass from **16 325** in 2014 to **20 992** in 2015.

It is a fact that in terms of delivery of housing units in this province we have turned the tide. Our capacity to deliver human settlements has improved tremendously. We have delivered no less than 7740 houses and we are optimistic that we will reach the target by the end of this month. Statistics speaks for themselves.

We also did not pretend as if there are no challenges in the Department of Education.

We actually spoke at length about problems in that Department. We went beyond just talking but announced to the people of

Limpopo the measures we have put in place to improve the situation that Department.

The measures we have put in place include placing the department under administration in terms of section 18 of the PFMA. In this regard, we seconded senior and experienced officials from Provincial Treasury to Department of Education. There are indeed signs of improvement that have begun to show.

Honourable members

We have also announced the plans we have put in place with regard the challenges of drought and water service provision in general.

Just yesterday I had a meeting with Minister of Water and Sanitation to address the situation of water challenges in Tubatse and Polokwane. I am happy to announce that we delivered two biggest Mobile Water Storage tanks to the community of Praktiseer.

We are currently in the process of upgrading Olifantspoort Water Treatment Plant from 60ML/d to 90ML/d and doubling of bulk pipeline from the very plat to Polokwane.

This is addition to a comprehensive Provincial Water Master Plan that has since been developed and is due to be finalised in April.

Once finalised, the Plan will include the water systems integration that will show how the current un-serviced

communities will be covered, including infrastructure maintenance, water supply sustainability and possible sources of funding.

As Amilcar Cabral said once said, “***tell no lies, claim no easy victories***”.

Madam Speaker,

As I conclude, I want to thank you for facilitating such a vibrant and empowering debate on the State of our province..

I hold no doubt that all of us are motivated by the drive to make Limpopo and our country a better place to live in.

I thank you very much for your inputs.

Let us continue to work together for a greater good of the residents of this Province.

Perhaps before I sit down, let me take this opportunity to inform Honourable Members that Statistics SA will from 07 March 2016 up to 22 April 2016 be conducting the largest ever Community Survey.

This community survey will provide fresh information on living conditions of South Africans including water, electricity, sanitation, employment, so on and so forth.

The survey will also assist our Local municipalities to have objective data that speaks to the moment as opposed to census 2011 data.

Also important is the fact that this community survey will provide short-term employment to over 10 thousand unemployed people in the country.

Over 1100 of these young people will be from our province.

We have already assured the Statistician General of the support of our government, including our municipalities; I appeal to this House to also support Stats SA in this regard.

I thank you!