

SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO MR. CHUPU MATHABATHA FOR THE OPENING OF PREMIER'S SPECIAL INTER-GOVERNMENTAL FORUM HELD AT BOLIVIA LODGE.

26 JULY 2017

Members of the Executive Council;

Director General, Ntate Nape Nchabeleng;

Executive Mayors and Mayors present here today,

SALGA Provincial leadership,

Office of the Auditor General,

Esteemed participants,

Ladies and gentlemen:

Let me start first my thanking all of you for honouring our invitation to this Special Premier's Inter-Governmental Forum.

We have called this special meeting to mainly look into the state of readiness for the coming circle of municipal audits.

It is clear from the Programme that is in front of all of us that the nature and character of this meeting is forward-looking and planning oriented.

Ladies and Gentlemen – before I can go any further with my remarks, I wish to take this opportunity and say a big congratulation to the 13 municipalities that attained an unqualified audit opinion from the AG.

In the words of the AG, Limpopo is showing a good momentum towards the right direction. Obviously, our challenge is to sustain this momentum, hence we have called this meeting.

Sustaining this momentum will require us to take care of the following basic controls that, according to the AG still require attention:

- That, Leadership should create a culture of honesty, ethical business practices and good governance.
- That, municipalities should ensure proper record-keeping to ensure that complete, relevant and accurate information is accessible and available to support financial and performance reports.
- The need to instil basic controls to ensure the processing of transactions in an accurate, complete and timely manner.
- The need to monitor compliance with legislation, the rules and regulations

- The need to fill of vacancies in critical areas such as municipal managers, chief financial officers, heads of supply chain management and chief information officers.
- Instilling appropriate information technology controls, with emphasis on security management, user access management and business continuity.

Colleagues;

I am confident that our discussions and presentations will be informed by our own comprehensive diagnosis of the state of health of our all municipalities from an audit point of view.

This diagnosis will without doubt inform how we will be engaging with all the presentations from various municipalities on their action plans to improve the coming audit outcomes.

I cannot over-emphasise the significance of this self diagnoses in the context of governance, service delivery and financial performance.

In fact, a phenomenon called diagnosis itself is an exercise of extreme significance in the life of every living creature.

I recently said to the meeting of the ruling party that we must always master the art to make correct diagnosis. If we misdiagnose we are definitely going to prescribe a wrong

medication. With a wrong medication we are assured of a prolonged illness.

A prolonged illness with certainly result in death. It is for this reason that I want us to be honest and thorough about this process of introspection. In doing this, we must avoid the temptation to become subjective and dishonest.

I have learnt that the AG presentation will be introducing a new methodology for Municipal Audits. It is your duty leaders and top officials in municipalities to acquaint yourselves with this methodology. We don't want you to cry foul when the new audit season comes, and blame everything on the methodology.

At the end of the day, this methodology is nothing but a system of methods the AG will be using to investigate if you have conducted the business of our municipalities in accordance with the law and agreed policies and procedures.

Ladies and gentlemen:

This meeting will also receive a presentation from CoGHSTA and Treasury on support programmes to improve municipal audit.

However I need to emphasise that, these support programmes will not by themselves produce result. Municipalities must be willing and receptive to these support and other interventions.

To use our metaphor of diagnosis, this means that once municipalities have been made aware of their specific challenges, they must be willing to accept the help that we have tailored for them through CoGHSTA and the Provincial Treasury. Otherwise our municipalities will remain like that patient who refuses to take his/her medication.

But refusing to take medication in the case of our municipalities is not a choice. We should get our books correct. Because we administer public funds, public interests demand that we should demonstrate prudence and efficiency in the manner that we use these public resources.

I have said it and will continue to say it, that negative audit opinions undermine the confidence of our people in governance institutions. We cannot be seen to be utilising public resources without due consideration. Financial accountability and transparency is not optional.

The reason is simple; the resources at our disposal are there to ensure that citizens have access to basic amenities as guaranteed in our constitution.

These resources are there to ensure that municipalities expand the network of electricity connection.

Our communities expect municipalities to use resources at their disposal to improve in areas of access to decent sanitation and refuse removal.

It should not be painful to do things right and by the book.

Colleagues;

I am confident that your presentations will also highlight areas of difficulty so that we can deploy our collective wisdom to finding relevant solutions.

We should not mask difficulties.

In conclusion, I wish to urge all of you to treat all the presentations and discussions in this meeting with the respect they deserve.

I am taking this opportunity to declare the sitting of this Forum to be opened. I am confident that we will have a rewarding day and a successful meeting.

I thank you!