

STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE HONOURABLE CHUPU MATHABATHA TO THE SIXTH LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE AT THE JACK BOTES HALL, POLOKWANE.

27 February 2020

Honourable Speaker;  
Deputy Speaker of the Legislature;  
Honourable Members of the Legislature;  
Members of the Executive Council;  
The President of SALGA and your Executive Mayors and Mayors;  
The leadership of the ruling party, the African National Congress;  
Leaders of opposition parties;  
Chairperson of Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders;  
Our esteemed Majesties, Kings and Royal Highnesses;  
Former MPs and MPLs;  
Director General and Heads of Departments;  
Stalwarts and veterans of our struggle;  
Provincial Commissioner of Police;  
Heads of our Chapter Nine and Chapter Ten institutions;  
Leadership of religious community;  
Leadership of organised business and labour;  
Youth, women and community leaders;  
Members of the media;  
Distinguished guests;  
Ladies and gentlemen:

This year, 2020, marks the 65th year since the adoption of the Freedom Charter. It was on the 26th of June 1955 when the ANC-led Mass Democratic Movement, convened the Congress of the People in Kliptown, Soweto.

The purpose of this gathering was to solicit direct inputs from the people about South Africa they yearned for. This was in response to the brutal system of apartheid, which the United Nations has declared as crime against humanity.

At the apex of the people's demand was a government which is based on the will of the people. The people went on to demand equal treatment of all national groups living in South Africa. The people further demanded that everyone should share in the country's wealth, and that the land should be shared amongst those who work it.

The other demands included the question of equality before the law, equal enjoyment of human rights, work, houses, security and comfort. Over and above

this, the people demanded that the doors of learning and culture should be opened for all.

As we celebrate the 65th anniversary of this historic document, we recommit ourselves to the total realisation of the dreams and aspirations of our forebears. Whilst a lot has been achieved over the past 25 years of freedom and democracy, a lot more still need to be done to restore the dignity of our people.

Honourable Members;

In the same vein, we are meeting during the month that marks the 30th anniversary of the release from prison of our international icon, President Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela. The release of Madiba accelerated the downfall of the system of apartheid. It actually ushered in an era of hope for the hopeless majority.

As we conduct our work in government today, we are reminded and guided by President Mandela's words when he said that "like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the action of human beings."

He went further to say that "Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life".

Madam Speaker;

It is against this background that the 6th administration is anchored on the following priorities;

The building of a capable, ethical and developmental state,

The transformation of economy and job creation,

Education, skills and health,

The delivery of reliable and quality basic services,

The transformation of human settlements and the strengthening of local government,

Social cohesion, safe communities, and, above all,

The building of a better Africa and a better world.

Madam speaker;

Before I could go any further with my speech, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my deepest gratitude to the Commander In Chief of the South African National Defence Force, His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa, for the decision to host the 2020 edition of the National Armed Forces day in our Province.

This event, which was hosted by the City of Polokwane, came with huge socio-

economic spinoffs for the Province. For so many weeks, our accommodation facilities from Mokopane, Polokwane up to Haenertsburg were always fully booked.

Beyond these spinoffs, the event helped to instil a sense of national pride and exposed so many of our young people to a world of career opportunities in the army. It is therefore not surprising that the SANDF received almost 5 500 applications from our young people who are interested in joining the army. We also want to thank the army for having reached out and helped to renovate Ipopeng Secondary School and Sekutupu Old Age Home in Zebediela.

## A GROWING ECONOMY

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

As a nation, we are faced with the reality of an unfavourable economic outlook which impacts negatively on our developmental objectives.

This reality is manifested by low growth rate, energy supply challenges and corruption which undermine sustainable development in our economy.

Nevertheless, as Limpopo, we have noted marginal improvement with regard to economic growth. Statistics show that our economy has been growing at an average rate of 1% in the recent past. This is certainly far less than what we need in order to achieve our developmental objectives.

We are, however, confident that we have managed to place the Province on a pedestal for higher growth trajectory.

It is within this context, that we are implementing some of the major catalytic projects, which are aimed at stimulating economic growth and job creation.

These projects include the Musina-Makhado SEZ, the proposed Tubatse SEZ, the revitalisation of the Industrial Parks, agricultural and several mining initiatives.

Madam Speaker;

In terms of the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone (SEZ), we have recorded significant progress. As we speak, we have since completed the External Master Plans for both the Southern and Northern parts of the SEZ. In the same vein, the Internal Master Plan for the Southern part is complete. We have now completed the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study for the Northern side, while the process is at 90% for the Southern side.

I have got no doubt that we are indeed moving from expressions to practical actions. It is also pleasing to report that the Musina-Makhado SEZ Company has recently signed an additional 1.1 billion US dollars investment commitment.

Whilst on the other hand, Shaanxi CEI Investment Holdings has made a commitment of 5 billion US dollars for a vanadium and titanium Smelter Project.

In an effort to attract further investments to the Northern side of the SEZ, we hosted a successful investor conference in November 2019.

We are also happy to announce that a local company has committed to manufacture, amongst others, new energy solar system products, energy electric

vehicles, energy storage systems and high-density polyethylene water pipes. With regard to the issue of water availability for the Musina-Makhado SEZ, we are finalising discussions with our Zimbabwean counterparts.

Madam Speaker;

We are equally delighted to report that the training of young people is taking shape. In this regard, we have launched a fully-fledge training centre in Musina. We therefore implore on all young people to seize the opportunities presented by these developments around the SEZ.

With the latest additional investment commitment of 6.1 billion US dollars as alluded to earlier on, the number of projected jobs to be created by the Musina-Makhado SEZ project has since being revised upward from the initial 21 000 to 26 000.

On the other hand, we are making significant progress in terms of the Tubatse SEZ. We have finalised the Master Plan and the infrastructure needs for the project have since been completed and costed. This project has an investment value of R25 billion and it is projected to create over 8000 job opportunities.

In line the new requirements, we will submit our revised Business Plan for the Tubatse SEZ to the Minister of Trade and Industry by the end of September this year.

Honourable Members;

The program to revitalise our Industrial Parks is well on course. This program is aimed at breathing life of economic activity into our townships.

The Seshego, Nkowankowa and Thohoyandou Industrial Parks have a combined occupancy rate of about 80%. As we have said, the activities in these Industrial Parks include agro-processing, manufacturing, storage facilities and recycling. To this end, these Industrial Parks have created a total of 6 256 jobs.

In keeping with our commitment to industrialise the economy of our Province, we will together with the Department of Trade and Industry strengthen our investment in these Industrial Parks. This will go a long way towards stimulating the much-needed economic activity and creation of more sustainable jobs.

Madam Speaker;

As a rural Province, with abundance of arable land, agriculture remains one of our economic competitive advantages. It is in this context that we are hard at work to unlock the potential of agriculture in order to ensure maximum contribution of this sector to food security, economic growth and job creation.

To date, we have made remarkable progress in revitalising primary agriculture and supporting agro-processing.

Accordingly, we have put together a team of experts to drive the revitalisation of our agriculture and agro-processing value chain plan. This Plan, which should be finalised in June this year, will focus on;

- Research and development;
- Land availability and access;
- Finance and partnership models;
- Production, markets and logistics, and;
- Capacity building and training.

Honourable Members;

We are also happy to announce that our irrigation scheme revitalisation program is well on track. In Ephraim Mogale Municipality alone, a total of 345 hectares of cotton have been planted. This will benefit no less than 74 small-scale farmers in Zamekomste, Dichweung, Tsimanyane and Readirabaswa. The projected harvest for this cotton is 522 tons, with an estimated 300 seasonal jobs during harvesting period.

On the other hand, the process of de-bushing of more than 100 hectares is in progress for Mogalatjane Irrigation Scheme. I am also delighted to announce that the designs for 41 hectares at Tswelopele Irrigation Scheme in Fetakgomo-Tubatse Municipality have since been approved. In the same vein, we are concluding engagements with regard to the Kolokotela and Setlaboswana Irrigation Schemes.

Honourable Members;

We have committed ourselves to supporting Black farmers in order to increase their entry into the mainstream food value chain. We are doing this through ensuring access to supportive infrastructure and the markets.

As part of this support, I am pleased to announce that the construction of Matsika Pack House is underway and is expected to be completed by June this year.

Similarly, the upgrading of tomato paste processing facility for Norjax Canning is near completion. The construction of the physical infrastructure is expected to be completed by the end of this month. Commissioning is expected to happen in May of this year.

We have also commenced with the establishment of Farmer Production Support Units. These Units are the first phase of our Agri-Parks. They provide a cluster of services for primary production, post-harvest handling, storage, as well as

coordination of transportation logistics.

During this Financial Year, we will complete the construction of two of these Units, which are Masala Farmer Production Support Unit in Mopani and Vleisboom Farmer Production Support Unit in Sekhukhune.

The construction for the Tshiombo Farmer Production Support Unit in Vhembe and Mapela Farmer Production Support Unit in Waterberg will commence in the 2020/2021 Financial Year.

Madam Speaker;

True to our commitment to invest in training and skills development of our farmers, to date, we have trained over 960 farmers in the Province. In partnership with Agri-Seta and through our Agricultural Colleges, we have provided focused skills development programmes to a further 306 farmers across the province.

Madam Speaker;

Mining and ancillary services dominate our provincial economy at 25% contribution to the GDP. During the period under review, Limpopo accounted for 24% of national mining output.

Despite being a dominant sector in our provincial economy, employment in this sector has decreased from 106 000 to 86 000 jobs between the 4th quarter of 2018 and the 4th quarter of 2019.

Some of these job losses can be attributed to the fact that some mines in Sekhukhune, Lepelle-Nkumpi and Vhembe were placed under Care and Maintenance. As a matter of fact, we lost over 11 000 jobs as a result of these mines being placed under this Care and Maintenance process. Significant losses were also recorded in the Platinum Group Metals (PGM) because of the decline in platinum prices on account of weakened global demand.

However, the outlook is not that bleak since there is a slight recovery in this sector. For an example, palladium has seen an exponential price increase. This has resulted in increased mining activities in the Platinum Group Metals.

Honourable Members;

Despite all these challenges in the sector, mining still has a future in the Province. The industry has committed a total investment of R36.3 billion in the next five years. These investments include:

R1,6 billion by Modikwa Mine for Platinum Group Metals in Sekhukhune;  
R5,4 billion by Lesego Mine Project for Platinum Group Metals in Waterberg;  
R20 billion by Ivanplat mine for Platinum Group Metals in Waterberg;  
R5,1 billion by Exxaro for coal mining in Waterberg, and  
R4,2 billion by Lejaja Mine for coal mining, in Waterberg

It is our firm belief that these mining expansions will not only contribute to the growth of our economy, but will also help to create the much-needed jobs for our people.

Madam Speaker;

Tourism is another economic competitive advantage for our Province. Notwithstanding the sluggish economy, this sector remains one of the most resilient of our economy. In 2018, it contributed R109 billion to the national GDP and employed 1.5 million people.

It is reported that the international tourist arrivals in Limpopo recorded 2.2 million during the period under review. This pattern is indicative of a constant increase in international arrivals to the Province. We are rated the most visited province with regard to domestic travel. In 2018, our Province welcomed 3.3 million visitors.

Honourable Members;

A thriving partnership between government and the private sector is a necessary condition for growth and development. It is for this reason that we have partnered with a number of private sector entities through an initiative called Impact Catalyst.

The identified key thematic areas of focus for the work of the Impact Catalyst initiative include agro-processing, bio fuels, Game Farming, ICT and Waste recycling.

As part of our strategic economic partnerships, we are finalising the review of our Industrial Strategy. This Strategy is intended to help intensify the implementation of identified clusters, across mining, agriculture and tourism.

Secondly, the Strategy will help to position the Province in terms of dealing with emerging new sectors such as renewable energy, the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the economy and the creative industry. The Strategy is expected to be finalised by the end of September.

Madam speaker;

We have, on the other hand, begun the process to review the Limpopo Development Plan (LDP). As you all know, the LDP is the socio-economic growth and development blueprint for the provincial government.

The 2015-2019 LDP served mainly to guide the 5th Administration in terms of integrated planning and ensuring effective and efficient delivery of services. In this 6th Administration, the revised LDP, will focus on the following areas in order to put our province on a higher trajectory of economic development; With regard to mining, the emphasis will be beneficiation of our mineral endowments such as coal, iron ore, platinum and silicon through our industrialisation strategy;

With regard to the agricultural sector, we will strive to expand our agro-processing muscles to ensure that as a Province we reap full benefits; We will promote our tourism sector through tailored tourism offerings;

We will diversify the economy through placing emphasis in manufacturing, thus creating value along commodities with competitive advantage; and We will also support SMMEs and Cooperatives through better coordination, financing and public-private incubation.

I have got no doubt, whatsoever in my mind, that this focused approach to economic development, will indeed become a game-changer in redefining the economic landscape of the Province. We have reached a stage whereby we must expand the productive capacity of our economy.

## INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

During the last State of the Province Address, we committed ourselves to pay a special attention to the twin-challenge of water and roads.

Today I am able to report to the people of our Province that with regard to the issue of water infrastructure, we have registered the following significant milestones;

The Polokwane Bulk Water Scheme which is 100% complete;

The Polokwane Regional Waste Water Treatment Works is at over 74% physical progress;

The physical construction of Mametja-Sekororo Bulk Water Supply is at 97% overall progress;

The Nebo Bulk Water Supply is at 90% physical progress;

The Moutse Water Treatment Works is at 90% physical progress;

The Malekana Water Treatment Works is at 90% physical progress;

Nandoni to Nsami Pipeline project which is at 54% physical progress;  
Sinthumule-Kutama Bulk Water Supply which is at 47% physical progress;  
Giyani Water Service project which is at 17% physical progress;  
Planning has been completed for Olifantspoort Water Scheme; and  
An upgrade of Nandoni Water Treatment Works is at the planning stage.

In the same spirit, I also wish to welcome the recent commitment made by the Minister of Water and Sanitation, Mme Lindiwe Sisulu, during our visit to Moutse two weeks ago. The commitment of R143 million that she made will go a long way towards addressing water challenges in Moutse, Motetema and surrounding areas.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, we are still not comfortable with the status of water service delivery and infrastructure in the Province.

Honourable Members;

There are still systematic challenges which include lack of integrated planning and poor project management. I have since directed the MEC for CoGHSTA to facilitate engagements with the Ministry of Water and Sanitation and all water authority entities, including municipalities to review poor service delivery mechanism with regard to the delivery of water to our communities.

Madam Speaker;

Quality road infrastructure is the back-bone for socio-economic development. In line with this perspective, we are happy to report that there is an impressive progress with regard to the implementation of the road infrastructure projects across the Province.

I would like to take this opportunity, to commend the South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL) for having resumed work on the Polokwane and Musina N1 by-pass projects.

In the same vein, we appreciate the 10km project for the expansion of the R-81 road between Munnik and Ga-Sekgopo. These projects, together with the Moloto road to Marble Hall are currently under construction.

Honourable Members;

The construction works with regard to the following roads are well under way:  
13km from Tshikanoshi to Malebitsa;  
29.5km from Thomo to Hlomela; and  
12.4km from Calais to Ga-Sekororo.  
Part of the roads to be upgraded from gravel to tar in the next Financial Year

include, but not limited to the following;  
N11 Mokopane Ring Road and Mmapela to Mokopane in the Waterberg District;  
Namakgale to Phalaborwa in the Mopani District;  
Louis Trichardt to Albasini, Albasini to Tshakuma in the Vhembe District; and  
Steelpoort Riba to Kokwaneng, Kokwaneng to Ga-Mapodile, Ga-Mapodile to  
Burgersfort in the Sekhukhune District.

Madam Speaker;

We have made great strides with regard to the mandate of connecting households to the electricity grid. The target we set for ourselves in terms of Limpopo Development Plan (LDP) was to connect 90% of households with electricity by 2019. I am happy to report that we have surpassed this target. As we speak, 92% of households in Limpopo are connected to electricity.

Madam Speaker;

With regard to the delivery of low cost housing to the poor of our Province, we can say with authority that we have turned the tide.  
Last year we committed to build a total of 10 456 housing units. This included the rollover from the 2018/19 of 3921 housing units. To date 6 232 housing units have been completed. The remainder is at various stages of construction and will be completed by the end of this Financial Year.

Honorable Members;

In terms of sanitation infrastructure, we had set ourselves a target to connect 50% of households to decent infrastructure by 2019. This was one area where we were coming from a very low baseline. I am happy to report that to date over 54% of our households are connected to decent sanitation infrastructure.  
With regard to school infrastructure, particularly sanitation, we have begun to register visible progress.

As I speak, a total of 515 schools in the province will benefit from a process of constructing decent school sanitation infrastructure.

The appointment of contractors to build sanitation infrastructure in 215 schools will happen before the end of next month. A further 300 schools will have their sanitation infrastructure built through the Presidential School Sanitation Infrastructure Grant. This will go a long way towards supporting our program to eradicate unsafe school sanitation infrastructure.

Madam Speaker;

The institution of traditional leadership continues to play an important role in our communities. Traditional leaders continue to lead and unite our people. They remain custodians of our traditions, customs and cultures.

As I committed in the previous SOPA that government would construct decent offices for our traditional councils. I am happy to report the following progress; Construction is complete at Mudabula Traditional Council and at Rambuda Traditional Council.

Construction work is continuing at Masia Traditional Council, Mphaphuli Traditional Council, Dikgale Traditional Council, Mogashoa-Dithlakaneng Traditional Council and Ditlou-Machidi Traditional Council.

The outstanding Matsepe Traditional Council will be prioritised for implementation in the next Financial Year.

In an effort to enable our traditional leaders to carry out their functions with ease, I have decided to provide the senior traditional leaders with vehicles. This will only cover the category of senior traditional leaders who did not receive these tools of trade when I gave others a few years ago. These senior traditional leaders are Mothapo M. R of Bakgaga ba Mothapo, Mmamadi O.T of Babirwa ba Mmamadi, Kekana M. F of Amandebele, Matlala M. M. of Matlala a Ramoshebo and Ntwampe D. A. of Magadimana Ntweng.

Honourable members;

Following the concerns raised by traditional leaders with the Premier, we have started with the process of amending Limpopo Traditional Leaders and Institution Act. This process should, amongst others, results in the extension of the period for the reviewing of Acting Traditional Leaders to a longer period in order to ensure stability of the traditional leadership institutions. In this regard, we call on all traditional leaders to make the necessary inputs in order to enrich the outcomes of this review process.

Madam Speaker;

Limpopo has long embraced the urgency of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. We are doing exceptionally well with regard to the task of establishing core access points in municipalities and extending new fibre networks across the Province.

We are doing this by ensuring that we expand the footprint of the broadband network into our deep rural areas.

We have completed the Broadband Architectural network designs for the Province. We have also managed to complete the construction of the Data Centre. This is our ICT nerve centre and a foundation of our connectivity to various institutions.

We have also completed the Network Operating Control Centre, the Training and the Call Centres. These are the operations and management facilities of the network. We have thus managed to establish several WI-FI hotspots across the Province. In addition, 40 sites are connected in the Vhembe District in partnership with USAASA.

Madam Speaker;

In October 2019 we approved a Turnaround Strategy for the Great North Transport. With capital injection of R380 million over the METF period, I am happy to announce that we have, in earnest, begun to implement this Strategy. We have since purchased 75 buses. Thirteen of these buses have been delivered this week. Twenty more buses will be received in the next two weeks whilst the remaining 42 will be received by the end of April.

The areas to be prioritised, which for some time had challenges, include but not limited to Polokwane, Makhado, Giyani, Mokopane, Motetema, Marble Hall and Burgersfort.

Through our Bus Subsidy program we continue to ensure that the price of public transport, which is the largest mode of transport for the poor, remain affordable. This in turn helps to ensure that the poor and the working class use their income on important social items such as food and clothing.

Even more importantly is the fact that this subsidy sustains over 2000 permanent jobs in the industry. In the coming Financial Year, we have set aside an amount of over R814 million to support the public transport industry.

Madam Speaker;

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) remains a key government intervention in the lives of the poor and unemployed. This program provides short to medium term employment and skills development to our people.

Three months ago, we launched Phase 4 of the EPWP program with a target of over 475 000 Work Opportunities. Thus far we have already managed to create 42 332 Work Opportunities through the Environment, Culture and Social sectors. In addition, the Non State Sector has contributed over 25 000 Work Opportunities.

EDUCATION FOR ALL

Madam speaker and honourable members;

Investing in the education of our children is without doubt an investment in the future of our country. It is for this reason that this ANC government is directing more resources towards expanding access to education and improving the quality of our education outcomes.

If the latest Grade 12 results are anything to go by, we are then justified to say that we are beginning to see positive returns on our investment in education in this Province.

In 2017 our Grade 12 results showed an increase of 3.1%; the 2018 results improved by 3.8% and we kept the momentum going. Our 2019 Grade 12 results gave us another 3.8% increase.

These results must be understood in the context of our inherited situation as Limpopo. We are the second most rural Province in the country. On the other hand, the number of children who sat for the 2019 Grade 12 examinations in Limpopo is the third largest in the country.

Having started at a mere 38% pass rate in 1996, we are happy that we are today sitting at above 73%. This significant improvement is a clear indication that we are on a right track towards achieving our 80% target.

Most importantly, is the fact that 9 out of 10 of our education districts are performing above 65%.

It is also worth mentioning that the number of our underperforming circuits have been reduced from 51 in 2018 to 37 in 2019. We can't forget to mention that out of the 33 best performing students in the country, 9 came from Limpopo.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Tiyani Mbendzane, a former learner from Rivoni School for the Blind, for his outstanding achievement. He is the best learner in the country in the special schools category.

His former principal, Ms Conny Mabasa has joined us in the House. Ms Mabasa and her team continue to make us proud by consistently producing good results.

Madam Speaker;

The face of education in Limpopo is, indeed, changing for the better. We have moved significant miles from the days when the delivery of learner-teacher-support-material was almost a nightmare for the Province.

I can confirm that every single school in this Province had textbooks and learner-teacher-support-material when schools re-opened in January.

We have also started with the process of constructing supportive and modern infrastructure for our two special schools. These schools are Asiphumelele in Sekhukhune District and Rivoni in the Vhembe district. The Rivoni Special school project is at procurement stage, whilst the Asiphumelele Special School project is at design stage.

Madam Speaker;

We are moving our schools into the Fourth Industrial Revolution. During this academic year, we will provide 75 secondary and 32 primary schools with ICT equipments.

We will be introducing Coding and Robotic Curriculum in 110 primary schools in 2021 academic year. Currently, 15 secondary schools are offering Information Technology at Grade 12 while 46 schools are offering Computer Applications Technology.

Madam Speaker;

As part of the initiative to ensure maximum attendance and concentration at school, we will continue to avail scholar transport to all the learners who are residing at least 5 Kilometers away from the nearest school. We are currently transporting over 42 000 learners to and from school every school day through our scholar transport initiative.

We will also continue to ensure that our school nutrition program reaches as many needy learners as possible.

At the moment, our School Nutrition Program feeds over 1.6 million learners across the province. These learners receive their meals every single school day without fail.

In line with our school sanitary towels project, we have set aside an amount of R32 million to benefit over 520 000 female learners from Grade 6 to Grade 12.

Honourable Members;

Early Childhood Development is high on the agenda for this government. In this regard, we have set aside an amount of over R320 million to support the early childhood development.

We will spend just over R37 million on the maintenance of existing ECD centers across all the five districts. Over 100 teachers have been sent for training for

ECD, out of which 40 have already graduated.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Honourable Members;

Youth development is at the apex of our priorities as government. Some of the challenges affecting young people are the issues of unemployment, substance abuse and the lack of skills.

According to Statistics South Africa, the biggest proportion of unemployed youth is those without Matric. They constitute over 55% of the unemployed population. This is followed by those with Matric as their highest qualification at almost 35%. It is therefore very clear that there is a greater relationship between employment and skills.

Responding to this reality, last week Tuesday I launched youth skills development initiative. Through a partnership with MSC College Polokwane, Gijima and MicSETA, we have placed over 300 young people on a skills augmentation programme which is a 12 months learnership.

Around November last year we have cemented a similar partnership with Google South Africa. This partnership will see us cooperating in training our youth in areas of digital skills, computer science and issues relating to cyber-security.

With regard to the National Youth Service Programme, the province has collaborated with MerSETA for Welding Learnership at NQF level 4 and Trade Test for 62 learners, which will be completed in May this year. In addition, our Artisan partnership with SEDA Limpopo has provided opportunities to 72 learners in our Jewellery Incubator Programme. This Artisan program will continue until 2021.

We are also in collaboration with Services Seta on Cleaning and Hygiene project in all the five districts, involving 110 youth participants.

We have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Roasa to implement a MerSETA program for the following:

70 interns to be placed in all 5 districts for a period of 24 months;

100 Electrical Apprenticeships;

25 Welding, 25 Fitting Apprenticeship, and

25 Diesel Mechanics will be implemented through Waterberg TVET College.

Working together with the South African National Council for the Blind (SANCB), we have placed 39 blind and short-sighted young people in various municipalities.

Madam Speaker;

Limpopo Province is the home of abundant artistic and creative talents. It is for this reason that government is committed to support and work with our young people to assist in nurturing and exposing this talent.

In this context I have instructed the MEC for Sport, Arts and Culture to expedite the process for the realisation of the much-awaited Limpopo Provincial Theatre. The MEC will make detailed pronouncement during her budget speech next month.

## ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

Our socio-economic development aspirations are to a greater extent dependent on the good health of our population.

We are intensifying our efforts in dealing with the leading causes of death and disease in our society. We are continuing with the work to ensure increased life expectancy; reduce infant and maternal mortality, and turn the tide against HIV/AIDS and TB.

Our efforts in this regard are rallied around the philosophy of health promotion. Indeed, through public health education, we can reduce infections, end lifestyle diseases, prevent disability and premature deaths.

Madam Speaker;

The Province will continue to invest more in the area of maternal health. We are guided by an understanding that no woman should lose her life or suffer any form of infirmity simply because she wanted to bring life to this earth.

In this regard, we are happy with the progress made in improving the Maternal and Child health in the Province. We used to be the worst performing province but now we have managed to reduce our maternal mortality from 189 per 100 000 to 106 per 100 000 deliveries. Despite this achievement, one death of a pregnant woman is one-death-too-many.

We shall not rest until we see all pregnant women delivering safely in our facilities and walking out with healthy babies.

It is for this reason that we have taken a decision to convert Voortrekker Hospital in Mokopane to a specialised Mother and Child Hospital. This will allow us to galvanise resources and attract specialised skills in order to provide the best

mother and child care services.

Honourable Members;

We are on course towards our vision for an HIV free generation. We have registered drastic reduction in the Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV. We are currently below the World Health Organisation target of 1% and continue to do well with latest figures showing around 0.7 % transmission rate.

We are also impressed with the number of patients who do not default on their Anti-Retroviral Treatment. We had targeted 290 000 and we currently have almost 317 000 patients who remain on their treatment. Remaining on treatment is very important in order to suppress the viral load so as to enhance the quality of life.

Madam Speaker;

Reliable and efficient Emergency Medical Services are a dependable pillar of a functioning public health system. It is for this reason that we continue to ensure that we have reliable, sufficient and well-equipped ambulances for the Province. In the next Financial Year, we will procure additional 50 ambulances.

Madam Speaker;

Limpopo welcomes the National Health Insurance Bill and we fully support the letter and spirit of the proposed legislation. We believe that no one should be denied access to quality healthcare simply because they are poor and can't afford. Good health is not some sort of a luxury which can be reserved for the selected few. As part of our readiness for the NHI, we are increasing the number of our clinics which are on Ideal Status level.

Accordingly, we are ensuring that more-and-more of our clinics have good infrastructure, adequate staff, adequate medicine, good administrative processes, and sufficient bulk supplies.

We have also increased the number of clinics operating on 24 hour basis. However, a challenge in this regard is the presence of criminal elements that continue to harass our staff at these facilities. We therefore, call on the communities to help us in ensuring safety and security of our facilities and staff.

Madam speaker;

We have witnessed increasing incidences of trauma across the Province, particularly as a result of accidents on our roads. At times our existing infrastructure is not sufficient to deal with the number of patients who require emergency trauma care.

As a result, we will be establishing the biggest Provincial Trauma Centre in Mokopane Hospital. This Trauma Centre will be well equipped and adequately staffed to provide care for patients suffering from major traumatic injuries such as car accidents or gunshot wounds. The implementation of this project will be rolled-out over the next four years.

We have also taken a decision to decentralise the Renal Unit in the Province. This means that patients who require kidney dialysis treatment will not have to travel to Polokwane for their treatment; such a treatment will be available in all our five districts.

Madam Speaker;

Our preventative healthcare approach should be supplemented by tertiary healthcare services which combine education, research and training. It is for this reason that we are strengthening our training platforms to support the establishment of the Limpopo Academic Hospital.

We are introducing cutting-edge technologies to support the delivery of quality healthcare in our Province. We have recently launched the high-tech CT scan at the Mokopane Hospital. This means that patients no longer have to travel to Polokwane for brain scans. We have extended the same technology to other regional hospitals like Letaba, Tshilidzini and Mankweng.

The backlog for cancer treatment is a well recorded problem for the country. We are however responding effectively to this challenge. We have recently launched our first state-of-the-art cancer machine worth R47 million at Pietersburg Hospital.

In this regard, I am happy to announce that our training efforts have seen Limpopo produce its first home-trained Oncologist. I am pleased to welcome in this House, a Limpopo produced Oncologist, Dr Ndivhuwo Dzivhani.

GOVERNANCE AND BUILDING A CAPABLE DEVELOPMENT STATE

Madam Speaker;

During the 5th Administration much focus was placed on stabilising the Provincial Administration, including addressing issues of financial mismanagement and improving audit outcomes.

We have achieved much progress in this regard, although there is still more work to be done.

We have completely eliminated disclaimer and adverse audit opinions in the Provincial Administration. In the last audit we have managed to receive two clean audit opinions. The number of unqualified audit opinions has also increased. The target for this Administration is to substantially reduce the number of qualified audit opinions and increase the number of clean audits.

To achieve this we need to deal with the issues of irregular expenditure in the Provincial Administration.

In this regard, I have directed the MEC for Provincial Treasury to attend to this matter, including providing necessary financial management support across all government departments and entities. This shall include, but not limited to strengthening control measures in all departments.

In the previous SOPA I announced in this august House that, I will sign Performance Agreements with the MECs. Following the recent adoption of Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) targets I am now ready to sign with the MECs. This will be done before the end of next month.

Honourable Members;

As we have said earlier, corruption is another impediment to development. It is for this reason that we will not relent in our commitment to fight corruption in all its manifestations.

We will continue to take decisive action against those who are engaged in corruption and maladministration. This, we will do without regard to a person's status in society or influence.

As we have always said, for every act of corruption, there is a corruptor and a corruptee. For those in the public sector who are found to have engaged in any form of corruption, we will continue to deal with them harshly and deny them to reap any dividend from their corrupt actions. We also call on those in the private

sector to assist us in fighting corruption. Let there be no reward for corruption.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

Improved access to basic services and the capacity of local government are mutually inter-related.

It is against this back-drop that as a measure of improving the capacity of our municipalities to carry out their constitutional mandate, we have put support systems in place to:

- Attract and retain the best skills, particularly in the areas of engineering, town planning, financial and project management;
- Build the capacity of municipalities to provide basic services; and
- Work with municipalities to support local economic development through sound and flexible regulatory regime.

Madam Speaker;

In the past five years we worked with municipalities to address what was a perennial challenge of inability to spend conditional infrastructure grants, such as the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG).

As we speak, there are only three municipalities which require attention with regard to MIG spending – these are the municipalities which had spent less than 30% of their MIG allocation by December last year. These municipalities include, Musina Local Municipality, Fetakgomo-Tubatse and Modimolle-Mookgophong. We are happy with the overall performance on MIG spending. However, as I have said last year in this House, our focus is now shifting from mere expenditure to impactful projects.

Municipalities cannot be allowed to sign cheques or pay millions worth of invoices for water projects while communities remain without drinking water. There should be a compatible relationship between the monies spent and the actual delivery of services on the ground. There must indeed be value for money.

Madam speaker;

It is worth-mentioning that it is not all doom-and-gloom. There are municipalities that are doing well with regard to good governance and sound financial management.

I want to commend the following municipalities for attaining unqualified audit opinion; Makhuduthamaga Local Municipality; Waterberg District Municipality; Thulamela Local Municipality; Molemole Local Municipality, and Letaba Local Municipality.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend the Capricorn District Municipality for having achieved clean audit opinion. I congratulate the Executive Mayor and his Council, the Municipal Manager and her team for a job well done.

Please, do not temper with the winning formula, we want you to sustain this result. More importantly, we want to see this result rubbing off to your local municipalities.

I also want to commend Thabazimbi Local Municipality for finally getting out of the disclaimer bracket - you are now well on your way to a clean audit opinion.

Madam Speaker;

Strong and effective municipalities are necessary pillars to support the District Development Model initiative.

In this regard, we want to thank President Ramaphosa for having chosen Waterberg District as one of the national pilot districts for this great initiative. We have already launched the Capricorn District Development Model. We are convinced that the District Development Model will amongst others be able to address the gaps in our models of service delivery. Part of these gaps which were identified by President Cyril Ramaphosa is, amongst others, the pattern of operating in silos as government.

## SAFER COMMUNITIES

Madam Speaker;

The fight against alcohol and substance abuse is a fight we cannot afford to lose. We have an inherent obligation to rescue our children from the deadly clutches of alcohol and substance abuse.

In the coming Financial Year, we will use an amount of no less than R13 million in the fight against substance abuse, including treatment and the rehabilitation of victims.

We will also spend over R62 million to assist the victims of crime and violence to rebuild their lives through our victim empowerment programmes.

Madam Speaker;

We must also commend the efforts of our police and the law enforcement agencies in the Province in tackling crime, particularly Gender Based Violence.

In the recent past we have seen increased incidences of violence perpetrated against women and children. This has been met with swift reaction from the Police.

We commend the Police for their diligence in dealing with the cases of Ms Precious Ramabulana, Dr Prudence Nkwashu and many others in the Province. We will not allow any case to go cold or any abuser to walk free.

There is a disturbing emerging common denominator amongst the perpetrators of these heinous crimes. Most of these perpetrators are repeat offenders who happen to be on parole. If there has ever been a need for a radical review of the parole laws and regulations, that time is now.

Madam Speaker;

Part of the criminality we are confronting head-on is the tendency to disregard and violate our traffic laws. This tendency is responsible for untold pain and suffering for the victims of road accidents.

As part of our strategy to respond to this challenge, in December last year we supplemented our provincial traffic police by recruiting 238 young people as traffic officers. We are convinced that their appointment will improve visibility and strengthen traffic law enforcement across the province.

The upgrading of the Limpopo Traffic College is near completion. As a matter of fact, phase two of the project is already at roof level. We have also set aside an amount of R23 million to kick-start phase three of the project which will include the construction of additional accommodation facilities for students.

We have also taken a decision to construct Driving License Testing Centers in Thohoyandou and Seshego at a combined value of R60 million. These facilities will bring services closer to the people and also help to reduce congestion at our testing stations.

## AFRICA AND A BETTER WORLD

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

As Limpopo we will continue to integrate our developmental plans and work with the rest of the Southern African Development Community, SADC. We are a gateway to the rest of Southern Africa and we must be seen leading the way with regard to the socio-economic integration of the region.

The experience we gained with the implementation of the Musina-Makhado SEZ is that African unity is a necessary pre-condition for the development we all yearn for.

It is in this context that we also applaud the finalization of the Africa Free Trade Agreement.

This weekend we will be hosting our brothers and sisters from various SADC countries during the Marula Festival in Phalaborwa. I therefore wish to take this opportunity to invite all of you to join us in Phalaborwa over the weekend.

## CONCLUSION

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

Last year, following the 6th General Election, we commenced a fresh new journey together. It is a journey of many and varied tributaries. However, we are certain that all of these tributaries will lead to a great river of fulfilment, through growth and development.

All the tributaries will lead to an oasis of our collective dreams. However, we are not oblivious; we know and accept that the path to this beautiful destination is not paved in glittering glass. It is instead a journey of extreme highs and discouraging lows. It is a journey of unfriendly dungeons and inviting vistas.

This is a journey we cannot abdicate. We are not cowards who would retreat from battle simply because the terrain is unfriendly and taxing.

We are not like the pessimists who always see a glass as half-empty; we see a glass not as half-empty but half-full. We are not like those pessimists who will pray for the rain and yet curse the clouds.

We will not betray our commitment to the people of Limpopo. We will traverse this journey towards our promised land, the land of the dreams and aspirations of the Freedom Charter.

We will marshal every effort, skill and commitment towards the task of growing the economy and creating the much-needed jobs for our people;  
We will not rest for as long as women and children are not free to walk our streets because of the demon of Gender-Based-Violence;  
We will not rest until the fight against alcohol and substance abuse is won;  
We will not tire from the task of building a capable state that serves all our

people;

Let's grow Limpopo together.

I thank you!