

**ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, AMBASSADOR
CHUPU MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE
PROVINCIAL YOUTH DAY CELEBRATIONS, HELD AT THE
CHUENE RESORT, POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY.**

16 June 2017

Programme director;

Members of the Executive Council;

Executive Mayor and mayors of our local municipalities;

Councillors;

Leaders of various political parties;

Leaders of our youth formations;

Our friends in the media;

Please receive my warm and special greetings directed to all young people of our Province.

Greetings to all of you who have made it to be with us here today and equally warm greetings to those who are following these proceedings at home and other different places.

I greet you in the name of our life-long leader, President Oliver Reginald Tambo.

As you know, in October we will mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Oliver Reginald Tambo.

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

He was a dear friend to the youth and believed in the potential of young people to shape the future of this country, the continent and the world.

President Tambo did not just believe in the potential of young people, he worked tirelessly to help unleash the potential of young people towards the discourse of nation building.

President Tambo believed in young people.

In his own words, the (youth) of any nation are its future. A country, a movement, a person that does not value its youth and children does not deserve its future.

If we are serious about the future, we must increase our investment in young people.

Programme Director - It is because of the sacrifices of leaders such as Oliver Tambo that we are able to enjoy and observe days such as the National Youth Day.

Indeed, President Tambo will be happy to see you gathered in this fashion commemorating your victory against the imposition of inferior Bantu Education system.

Indeed this day is about your victory as young people against a system that sought to limit your God-given potential.

It is a victory against a system that did not want to see any Black young person working as an Architects, Mathematicians, Medical Specialists, Astronomers or Actuaries.

This day is about a victory against a system that wanted to restrict you to the bondages of poverty, underdevelopment and hopelessness.

Programme Director;

This day is also about the celebration of the many victories that young people have scored over the past 23 years of our freedom and democracy.

Since 1994, young people, working with our progressive government, have managed wide open the doors of learning and culture for all.

Before 1994, education, particularly, higher education and training was an exclusive privilege of the selected few. Access to higher education was only for the children rich people and senior government officials.

Today it does not matter what your family background is, - any young person who is academically deserving and financially needy can never be denied access to higher education simply because he/she cannot pay.

If you are committed to your books and are financially in need, this government will ensure that you at least get your first degree or diploma.

To date, NSFAS is funding more than 405,000 students from a budget of over R10 billion. This is a massive achievement considering where we come from.

Even more pleasing, is the fact that NSFAS is funding over 200 000 students in the TVET sector in line with our country's skills revolution.

To add on this, government continues with other targeted funding schemes such as the **Funza Lushaka** Bursary which is aimed at promoting access to the teaching profession by our young people.

In this Province, we supplement the efforts of the national government with our own students' financial support initiatives.

Our various Provincial Departments continue to offer bursaries to support students from this Province to access higher education.

The Premier's Bursary Fund also supplements the efforts of government to assist young people to realise their dreams through education.

On matters of basic education, our government is continuing with efforts to ensure access to quality education for our children.

Today, over 96% of children in this province go to school without paying a single cent through our No Fee School Policy. These are the children who would otherwise be roaming the streets with their future doomed at a very young age. Thanks to the progressive policies of our government, they too can lay a claim on the future.

To add on to this, today, thousands of children in this province enjoy free meals at school five days a week in line with our National School Nutrition Programme – this another progressive policy by our government to support the dreams of young people.

Our Scholar Transport Policy also ensures transportation for thousands of school children who reside far from school free-of-charge.

In this Province we have a very robust and effective TVET college sector.

Access to these colleges is highly subsidised by the government.

The Madzivhandila and Tompi Seleka Colleges of agriculture continue to be functional in support of our Provincial growth and developmental objectives.

These colleges trains hundreds of young people and prepare them to play a significant role in the economic life of this Province in the sector which was previously almost exclusive for White people.

My clarion call to all of you as young people of our Province is to continue making education fashionable.

Your simple task in this regard is to make education fashionable. You must seize the opportunities that came with our freedom and democracy to equip yourselves with skills which you will use to advance the development of our country. Without education most of your dreams will just translate into nightmares.

Programme Director;

Let me also speak to our young people in the name of economic transformation. Our collective task for this year and beyond is to advance youth economic empowerment.

Youth economic freedom is a battle that must be won in your lifetime.

This freedom and democracy will be meaningless if it does not transfer economic power into the hands of the young people, who are not just majority but the future of our country.

Our political power must and will be used to support young people to become successful entrepreneurs.

The government must and will use its strength to support aspirant young farmers to become successful commercial farmers.

This economic freedom we are talking about must be relevant to a young person in Giyani, a young person in Thulamela, a young person in Tubatse, a young person in Molemole and a young person in Mankweng. It must be relevant to all young people of this province, from Bela-Bela to Musina.

This advancement towards youth economic empowerment should be embracive to all young people and not the selected and connected few. It should not be an economic freedom for just a few families, relatives and friends. Every young person must benefit from the economic empowerment we are talking about.

This empowerment should include a reform of procurement policies and legislation to make these laws to be biased to the interest of youth owned businesses.

We need to see more young people benefitting from government procurement so that they can sustain their businesses and make them employment vehicles to assist other young people.

Currently we are finalising new procurement policy that will be biased towards youth, women and people with disabilities. It is expected that by September this year new regime regulations will be in place.

This government has opened a lot of opportunity doors for young people.

At the beginning of the year, during the State of the Province Address, I announced a state-of-the-art provincial performance theatre is to be built in Polokwane.

Indeed, this project will go a long way to support our cultural industry, promote our rich and diverse cultures and create much needed jobs for our youth.

The challenge for you as young people is to seize the many opportunities at your disposal for your socio-economic emancipation.

However, for you to be able to seize these opportunities you need to develop and empower yourself. One of the ways of doing these is through education.

Without education and skills, your call for economic freedom in your life time will be reduced to an empty slogan without substance.

Programme Director;

I also wish you urge our young people to guard against tendencies which have the potential to liquidate their own future. One of these tendencies is corruption.

The billions of Rands which the country is losing to corruption can best be used in programmes that are aimed at your development – programmes such as increasing funding for both the higher education sector and our TVET colleges.

Corruption is your enemy number one as young people. You must reject and expose corruption whenever it manifests its ugly head. You must do this because corruption and theft of public resources steals from your future.

You must also refuse to be used as instruments to facilitate or hide corruption.

You must reject the glitters of corruption. If you agree to be corrupted now, you will be compromised for the rest of your life.

The skeletons of corruption will haunt you for the rest of your adult life.

Dear young people; the other negative tendency you must disassociate yourselves from is the abuse of substance and alcohol.

Drugs and alcohol are destroying young lives. It is heart-breaking to see young people being enslaved by drugs and alcohol.

Drugs will isolate you from your loved ones and introduce you to new and strange friends.

Part of your responsibility as young people is to organise yourselves and rid our streets from drugs and drug pushers. You must educate your peers about the dangers of drugs and alcohol abuse. You must also report those who push these drugs in your communities and street corners.

It is a known fact that the twin evils of drugs and alcohol abuse are responsible for violent crimes in our communities, including the rape of women and children.

I urge you to hate and fight drugs with the unmatched vigour and tenacity. Your future cannot and should not be undermined by drug lords.

In conclusion;

I want to urge you to position yourselves as defenders of our young democracy and not the torchbearers of anarchy and disruptions.

You must at all times refuse to be used as cheerleaders of tendencies that undermines our hard fought democracy and freedom.

You must be the first to say that South Africa is not for sale.

On behalf of our Provincial Government, I wish you a happy National Youth Day. Please celebrate with the knowledge that tomorrow is still a day.

I thank you!