

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

05 September 2019

Members of the Executive Council;
Director General, Ntate Nape Nchabeleng;
Executive Mayor of the Capricorn District Municipality, Cllr John Mpe;
Mayor of Polokwane Local Municipality, Cllr Thembi Nkadimeng,
Executive Mayors and Mayors present here today,
SALGA Provincial leadership,
Office of the Auditor General,
Representatives of ESKOM,
Representatives of the IEC,
Esteemed participants,
Ladies and gentlemen:

Let me join our Programme Facilitator, MEC Makamu in welcoming all of you to this edition of the Premier's Inter-Governmental Forum.

It is always an exciting opportunity to sit under the same roof with colleagues from parastatals and other spheres of government, to share experiences and exchange ideas.

I hold no doubt that we are all inspired by the urgent need to accelerate service delivery and to improve the socio-economic fortunes of the people of Limpopo.

I also know that we all agree that for us to be effective in delivering services to our people we need greater levels of cooperation.

Let me perhaps start by condemning whatever violence that is going on in the country. We are a border province and wish to warn anyone who wishes to venture into this type of violence, hatred against fellow brothers, that such will not be tolerated in this Province.

We cannot succeed with the assignment of creating and expanding opportunities for our people if we still conduct our activities in a silo style.

Working together is not a luxury; it is in fact, an obligation we cannot avoid.

The concept of Intergovernmental relations is therefore an important innovation in our system of governance.

Our constitution says that it is obligatory for the national government, the provincial government and the local governments to promote and facilitates intergovernmental relations.

Most importantly, this framework also provides the procedure to facilitate the settlement of intergovernmental disputes.

The concept of Inter-governmental relations is about the relationships between the three spheres of government.

In the context of the Provincial Inter-Governmental Relations, the most important relationship is between the provincial government and the municipal sphere of government.

Our constitution states that, our three spheres of government are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated.

Although the three spheres of government are autonomous, they exist in a unitary South Africa and they have to work together on decision-making and must co-ordinate budgets, policies and activities, particularly for those functions that cut across the spheres.

Colleagues would know that at a national level, the President's Coordinating Council (PCC) is the main coordinating body for IGR. This body consists of the President, the Deputy President, select Ministers, Premiers and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).

The PCC meets regularly to oversee the implementation of national policies and legislation, and to ensure that national, provincial and local development strategies are aligned to each other.

Where we are at a provincial level, the Premier is responsible for coordinating relationships between national, provincial and local government in the province.

It is for this reason that in this meeting we have representatives from national institutions, provincial and local government structures.

All of us work in a separate yet complementary manner. Whatever is done or not being done at a provincial level affects what developments at a municipal level. At the same time, whatever is taking place at a municipal level affects the entirety of the provincial administration.

It is for this reason that working together is not an option. It is an obligation we must fulfil with distinction.

Programme Director;

I may not be in a mood of name and shame. But I must really say that I have noticed a tendency by some municipalities of thinking that they can sing solo in our mass choir.

The level of cooperation from these municipalities leave so much to be desired. For some reasons, most of these municipalities are concentrated in one region. We really cannot be hiding behind the shield of autonomy and independence to frustrate the need for cooperation.

Our people know very little about the existing distinction between national, provincial and local spheres of government. They know us to be one government.

Our people do not expect to hear some academic explanations when it comes to issues affecting them directly.

Programme Director;

This meeting is expected to help entertain reports on the implementation of our previous resolution we have taken.

It is for this reason that we expect continuity of discussions and report back on mutually agreed tasks.

The fact of the matter is that we need to identify progress on every resolution we take as this Forum; otherwise we run the risk of reducing this Forum to a mere annual ritual with no practical significance.

Programme Director;

During the State of the Province Address I spoke about the improvements in the performance of municipalities when it comes to MIG spending.

I also went further to say that going forward we need to track expenditure versus the actual delivery of services on the ground.

It does not help to celebrate 100% expenditure of water infrastructure grant when communities do not even have a drop of water.

We want value for money. The allocated resources must go to the actual delivery of services and not any other direction.

I am confident that the Report on the state of water provision which will be tabled later, will paint a proper picture of our performance in this area of water provision.

You must remember that the issue of water provision was high on the agenda of our people during the process of election campaigning.

We received an overwhelming mandate from the people partly because we have committed to resolve this issue.

We should therefore be very serious when we interrogate the report from the Department of Water Affairs.

We should explain our challenges and make concrete proposals on how we can move out of the current quagmire.

Programme Director;

The other item directly linked to the function of inter-governmental relations is the issue of debt owed to our municipalities by various departments.

At the same time, we are also concerned about the increasing debt owed by municipalities to ESKOM.

The true spirit of intergovernmental relations demands that those departments that owe municipalities must service their accounts with municipalities.

The same is the case with those municipalities that owe ESKOM.

It is simple, for municipalities to do their work optimally, it is required that they should be paid for the services they render to various departments. Again, for ESKOM to discharge its statutory obligations of keeping the lights on, municipalities must service their accounts with ESKOM.

Anything, less than this, undermines the spirit of inter-governmental relations and cooperative governance.

Where there are difficulties, we need to sit down and engage each other.

Programme Director,

It would be to preach to the converted if I was to attempt to re-emphasise the significance of this meeting. I know that you are all here because you value the program of this meeting.

We must use this meeting to engage openly and honestly. Where necessary we must criticise each other within the confines mutual respect.

Let us treat all the presentations to this meeting with the respect and seriousness they deserve.

I do not doubt the capacity of this meeting to respond to serious issues facing our government, particularly issues facing our local government sphere.

Once again, I wish you robust and fruitful discussions.

I thank you.