

**OPENING ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO MR.
CHUPU STANLEY MATHABATHA AT THE INTER-
GOVERNMENTAL FORUM HELD AT BOLIVIA LODGE,
POLOKWANE, 30 MARCH 2022**

Programme Facilitator, Ntate Basikopo Makamu;

Members of the Executive Council;

Executive Mayors and Mayors of our Municipalities;

Chairperson of the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders;

Director General, HODs and Municipal Managers present;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and gentlemen:

It is always a great opportunity for us as the provincial government to interact with the leadership of our municipalities in this organised and focussed manner.

This Inter-Governmental Forum (IGR) is taking place after the successful presentation of both the State of the Nation Address (SONA) and the State of the Province Address (SOPA).

It also comes after our cordially engagement at the recent SALGA Provincial Conference.

Once again, I want to congratulate all Councillors who have been elected to lead SALGA in Limpopo and all those who have been elected to represent us at SALGA national.

Like I said before, your election to council is not a personal achievement, your election is a call to service.

The people who elected you expect that through your dedication and commitment, they will receive the following:

- Clean and portable drinking water;
- Regular refuse removal;
- Creation of job opportunities through stimulation of local economy;
- That municipal finances are managed properly and are accounted for, and;
- Good governance and ethical leadership from all of you.

In the main the people of Limpopo are looking upon this leadership that has gathered here today, for solutions to all their challenges.

That is why through forums like this, we have created a perfect platform for engagement, with only one purpose, that is to deal

decisively with all service delivery issues affecting our institutions.

Programme Director

Today's engagement comes at a time when we are still faced with many and diverse challenges. As we speak, poverty levels in our communities are increasing, unemployment rate is growing, delivery of basic services is poor, local economies are stagnant. I want to call upon you to be innovative and start championing programmes that will bring a relief to our people.

Coupled with the abovementioned, administratively, you are now confronted with the harsh reality of financial mismanagement, corruption and related tendencies. I always tell people that when we were appointed in 2014, the task for the 4th and 5th administration there was one clear mandate – stable, consistent and clean financial governance. That is our mission and what we stand for even today.

Therefore, the public expectation is for this leadership collective to deal with those. That is why, it is no longer an acceptable excuse for municipalities to continuously say that the reason for inability to spend allocated grants is lack of skills.

I am saying this because Councils are the ones empowered to make some of these strategic appointments.

Your challenge is to ensure that properly qualified and well-experienced persons are hired as municipal managers, CFOs and technical directors. All of us from different backgrounds where we come from you will agree with me that experience is the best teacher. People you appoint should have gone through job-based experience.

You have no excuse but to get the right men and women for the job.

Some of you are inheriting municipalities that are relatively well-oiled and performing better. It is not your mandate to start dismantling systems which have been perfected for years, for whatever reasons, political or religious. We must deal with that. Whether the person belongs to your political ideology or not leave that person and allow them to perform the job. Don't fix it if it is not broken.

Programme Director

Our cooperation as national government, provincial government and local government is critical. Key among issues here is the issue of audit performance of municipalities.

We are very fortunate that we always enjoy the presence of the Office of the Auditor General in our meetings. The AG has always been available to point out at our shortcomings and also impress on our opportunities.

That is why the joy I used to express about our audit outcomes as both qualitative and quantitative is being challenged.

Yesterday, I met with the Auditor General's Office for a briefing on the Municipal Audit Outcomes for the financial year ending 2021/2022.

While in the most parts we have seen steady financial health of most municipalities continue from the previous year, I am concerned about the three municipalities that have regressed.

They are Mopani District, Capricorn District and Greater Giyani Municipality. This is seriously concerning. I am more disturbed that Mopani has taken us back to the world of disclaimer. We have said that we are a disclaimer-free province, we can't be taken back. A disclaimer would mean that there is something that you are hiding, or that you disrespect people that we are supposed to serve - those are the reasons you can get disclaimer opinion. That's why I have asked the MEC for Treasury to go and investigate this disclaimer, it is not acceptable.

Unauthorized expenditure has marginally declined, however the non-submission of procurement documents and non-compliance with the MFMA generally are a worrying trend.

We should not allow this to happen as there should be consequence management implemented in municipalities. I have therefore called on the MECs for COGHSTA and Treasury to develop an intervention plan that can be implemented immediately.

In the same vein, we congratulate municipalities that continue to perform exceptionally well when it comes to audit outcomes. In this regard I would like to congratulate Waterburg District Municipality for having obtained Clean Audit Opinion.

Message of congratulations also goes to Elias Motsoaledi, Fetakgomo-Tubatse and Mogalakwena Municipalities for improved audit outcomes. We hope Mogalakwena will get out of the qualified audit outcomes. Keep it up and continue to making us proud.

Another issue that has come out sharply in our meeting with the AG is the issue of using consultants, this is not right. When municipalities appoint consultants they must be to help train staff to be able to do their own financials.

Colleagues

Lastly, we need to sustain this concept of Inter-government relations. It is closely linked to the concept of the District Development Model, as championed by our President, His Excellency Vho-Matamela Ramaphosa.

As you know, the District Development Model aims to improve the coherence of government service delivery. This model will use districts as centres of service delivery and economic development, which include job creation.

The District Development Model will also ensure that each district plan is developed with the input of concerned communities.

This is a people-centred and a people-driven development model.

I also want to challenge this collective that municipalities to join hands with LEDET to establish big cooperatives, that is, chain production cooperatives. By so doing you will be able to improve the economy of the municipality. It will be done when there is leadership that is not afraid to take decisions. In so doing we can decisively deal with the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

With those few words, I wish to welcome each one of you attending this IGR-Forum.

I thank you! Inkomu! Kea Leboga! Ndaa!