

**SOPA DEBATE RESPONSE BY THE PREMIER OF
LIMPOPO PROVINCE HONOURABLE CHUPU
MATHABATHA TO THE SIXTH LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL
LEGISLATURE AT THE LEBOWAKGOMO LEGISLATIVE
CHAMBER.**

03 March 2022

Honourable Speaker;

Honourable Deputy Speaker of the Legislature;

Honourable Members of the Legislature;

Members of the Executive Council;

The leadership of the ruling party, the African National Congress;

Leaders of opposition parties;

Director General;

Members of the media;

The people of Limpopo:

I am deeply honoured to be given this rare opportunity to present myself to this august house, in order to respond as the executive council, following the successful hosting of the State of the Province Address and special sitting that was held to debate the speech, held this week on Tuesday, 01 March 2022.

Madam Speaker

It is on this important note that I wish to start by applauding all honourable members of this house, from all political parties, who have on behalf of the people of Limpopo, vigorously and honestly debated our 2022 policy statement, the SOPA.

We are indeed deeply humbled by your dedication and commitment to move Limpopo forward. I wish to praise honourable members for acknowledging that our current socio-economic conditions are truly a by product of the effects of Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to the above, honourable members are in agreement that, we urgently need to focus more of our energies, on the implementation of measures which are focussed on economic development, geared towards fighting the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

It is precisely due to this motivation that we said during SOPA last week, that like a phoenix, Limpopo shall rise from the ashes of the devastation caused by coronavirus, to embark on a fresh journey of socio-economic development.

Flowing from the inputs of honourable members during the SOPA debate this week on Tuesday, I am pleased to announce that, the time for Limpopo to rise starts today. Yes, the journey starts now because, honourable members of this august house agree with this timeline.

Madam Speaker

We are seriously committed to ensure that as this current generation, our mission of renewal path for Limpopo is fulfilled. We are more steadfast and ready to achieve our aspired growth levels, to support employment creation projects and to promote our growth-enhancing plans.

Having gathered here today, we are motivated by the support we receive from honourable members of this august house, and we are therefore banking on this support, to achieve our developmental goals effectively and efficiently.

As we have mentioned during SOPA 2022, our mission to steer our economy to a green, resilient and inclusive developmental trajectory, in line with the National Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan and the Limpopo Socio-economic Recovery Plan, is well on track.

In addition to the above, our mission to position Limpopo as an investment destination of choice, aimed at enhancing much needed creation of employment, particularly for our youth, remain our collective target.

I am very much pleased that honourable members of this house, across all political party lines, concur that stimulating the growth of our economy should be high on the agenda of this government.

Madam Speaker

We are very much elated that, our mission to industrialize the economy of the province through mega projects in the manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism sectors, received some green light from both the people of Limpopo and this house.

The interest shown by the people of Limpopo for us to move with speed with regard to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, is a far much motivation for us to implement this incredible project as a matter of urgency.

The mandate from this house is very clear, it is that government need to stop the talk and ensure that Limpopo is digitalised. The people of Limpopo, particularly young people, who are in their majority poor, are looking upon us as leaders to ensure that, they also benefit from universal access to internet.

I therefore commit to this house that come the budget vote of the relevant departments, more details about the digitalization project will be shared with the people of Limpopo. It is however, vital that we confirm our commitment to this imperative assignment.

Members of this house also wants us to ensure that all the commitments made during the investment summit are followed up and implemented accordingly. We are here to reiterate our commitment that we will ensure that all the projects announced are implemented, so that our people can immensely benefit.

Honourable Members

You also mandate that water provisioning in Limpopo should be at the core of our industrialization agenda. In response, we are saying that water is also a source of life, without it, no economic development, no living species, and no human life can exist.

It is against the above-mentioned background that we are pleased to announce that, following our on-going engagements with the honourable Minister of Water and Sanitation, today, we bring good news to the people of Limpopo.

Honourable Members should be pleased to learn that following his appointment as Minister of Water, Honourable Senzo Mchunu has visited Limpopo more than four times in 2021 alone. His visit comes after we have had engagement with the then Minister of Water, Honourable Lindiwe Sisulu in June 2021.

We are pleased to have held these engagements with both the ministry and the minister, because during SOPA 2021, we made a commitment to the people of Limpopo that, the challenges we face as a province, regarding water provisioning has reached serious proportions, which required to be elevated to the ministry for permanent solution.

Indeed, we acknowledge that, variety of factors have impeded our ability as government, to supply the people of Limpopo with clean and portable water.

Honourable Members

We are therefore pleased to report that, the provincial government and the ministry of water and sanitation has adopted a 'provincial water master plan' as a blue-print to unlock all the water challenges in Limpopo.

This plan will be implemented under the stewardship of the Office of the Premier, working with all the relevant stakeholders. Part of the reason why is because, for the Limpopo Development Plan (LDP) to succeed, water supply is very critical.

This is motivated the fact that, the core pillars the LDP are driven by economic development and transformation agenda. Therefore, the issue of social development with a specific focus on provisioning of basic services is fundamental.

So, provisioning of water infrastructure and services is not only critical for the LDP, however, we agree that water is very key for economic development and social development alike.

In the same conclusion, water is also very vital for environmental management as well. That is why in Limpopo, we have already adopted the Limpopo Water Master Plan and Spatial Development Framework.

One of the motive forces behind the adoption of this important framework, was to provide for medium to long term development trajectory, on the provisioning of water network for industrialization, poverty reduction and to redress the existing levels of inequality in our province.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members

We are pleased to report to this august house that, we have revised our planning frameworks, to resolve the key challenge being the implementation of projects.

We have resolved on the above, among others because, it was one of the contributing factors which led to the province regressing on access to clean and portable water, from 83% in 2014 to 74% in 2019, as per StatsSA 's recent Household Survey.

To date, our team is focussed on ensuring and sustaining that, integrated plans, efficient and ineffective project management, in terms of water service delivery mandate, is achieved.

We are therefore pleased to report that, with all the systems and controls in place, our ability to achieve our provincial growth and development targets, including unlocking our bulk water projects and reticulation systems, is being realized.

As far as we are concerned, we are emerging victorious.

Madam Speaker

We are pleased that the executive, the legislature and the people of Limpopo, share a common vision about the Musina-Makhado and Fetakgomo Tubatse Special Economic Zones.

The above-mentioned two projects are without doubt our economic catalytic projects. Therefore, in giving concrete expression towards our resolve on socio-economic trajectory of Limpopo, all of us need to embrace the SEZs and support their existence.

I am therefore pleased Honourable Smalle that, our decision to source water from our neighbouring Zimbabwe and other SADC countries, will not impede on the construction of Musina Dam.

As we embark on this vital project called Musina-Makhado SEZ, we appreciate that industrialization of the corridor will require more innovation and tangible project management. Therefore, please be assured honourable member.

It is in the same vein that, we are making a clarion call to all the people of Limpopo to support the provincial government as it embarks on a journey of realizing the Fetakgomo Tubatse SEZ. This journey is currently at an advanced stage and the Steelpoort valley, with its massive mining activities, is ready to host this SEZ. Then agro-processing, manufacturing and logistics will thrive.

Madam Speaker

We have come to this house today, to report that, all the socio-economic developmental projects that the province is embarking upon, will be realized under the collective leadership of this current generation.

- The Spaza Shop relieve fund, will be accordingly distributed among all the deserving beneficiaries;
- The incubation support for the SMMEs, particularly those which are youth owned, will be sustained;
- The mining sector, will be supported to ensure that young people get jobs, that the people of Limpopo are empowered economically and that, they fulfil their Social Labour Plans commitment of skills development;
- The agricultural sector will continue to unleash variety of projects in line with the prescripts of our country's laws, guided by their primary objective of ensuring food security and growing the economy;
- Our esteemed Traditional Leaders, will continue receiving the existing systematic intervention from the provincial government, and we reiterate our call that they must resolve their disputes within the confirms of our traditional practices;
- Our military veterans across all party political lines, will continue being hailed and appreciated as our heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle;

- We heard honourable members when they said that, the forth-coming Education Lekgotla, should not be a meeting of old friends, rather the Lekgotla should come with practical means of retrieving Limpopo out of its misery of poor performance;
- The people of Limpopo have sent members of this august house, to inform our councillors that their election into councils is not a personal achievement, rather a mandate to serve them with love and care. We will continue reminding them about it;
- The people want a disclaimer free Limpopo, boosting with quality audit opinions, to translate this success into the provisioning of quality basic services, and we strive to achieve that;
- Honourable members, in response to SOPA 2022, our people have overwhelmingly stated that they need quality roads at their respective areas, and we are saying that the message is loud and clear and that this government has a plan;
- The people of Limpopo wants government to fight against coronavirus, so that they can reclaim the livelihoods and go back to fully functioning economy, and through the efforts as championed by the national department of health, we are certain that Limpopo shall rise;

- We have committed ourselves to achieve a capable, ethical and developmental state, free from corruption, fraud and maladministration. Today we stand before you to recommit ourselves to that generational decision;
- We reiterate of resolve to fight viciously against gender based violence and femicide, and we are calling upon every member of society to stop the talk and act against gender based violence and the killing of innocent women and children;
- This ANC government will continue passing laws that are pro-poor, with the intention to assist the needy and the marginalized majority. We will continue offering social grants, school nutrition, scholar transport, no-fee schools, to name but a few.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members

Please allow me, to appreciate the healthy working relationship between the executive and the legislature, through its oversight committees, and encourage that in order to build the Limpopo that we all want, let us continue working together.

Once again, I want to rest my case by reiterating our fundamental resolution that, from today, Limpopo is rising from the devastation of coronavirus and economic woes, and Limpopo will never be the same again.

With those few words, I thank You!