

ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, MR CHUPU MATHABATHA, ON THE OCCASION LAUNCH OF CANCER AWARENESS MONTH AND HANDOVER OF RADIOLOGY EQUIPMENT, HELD AT ST. RITAS HOSPITAL.

13 October 2022

Programme director, our MEC for Health, Dr Phophi Ramathuba
Mong-mabu, Kgoshi Madihlaba;
Our minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla;
Our District Executive Mayor, Cllr. Julia Mathebe;
Our host local Mayor, Cllr Minah Bahula;
Our healthcare workers in your different positions;
Friends from the Media;
Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen:

We appreciate that you have honoured our invitation to this launch of the Cancer Awareness Month. The highlight of this day is the handing over of life-saving radiology equipment to the hospital.

I want to start by thanking our Minister, Doctor Joe Phaahla for joining us in this event. As a Province, we know that we can always count on your support as we try our best to improve the quality of public healthcare in our province.

Perhaps, I should take advantage of this opportunity, and your presence, to commend you for your distinguished leadership of this important portfolio. You came in at a time when our country was being ravaged by the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

You led from the front and inspired all of us to follow your leadership in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are not oblivious, and we are not forgetful of how difficult and challenging the fight against Covid-19 was.

Through your inspiring leadership, the masses of our people went out in large numbers to vaccinate themselves against this killer virus.

Today we can safely say that the worst is behind us because we had someone like you providing leadership.

Your warm message of support will indeed inspire us to do even more.

I also wish to take this opportunity to commend our MEC for Health, Dr Phophi Ramathuba for championing our Rural Health Matters Campaign.

I know that this campaign which started in this Province is receiving admirations from outside this Province.

Provinces are beginning to emulate our example.

As you know, at the heart of this campaign is the belief that the right to quality healthcare is a non-negotiable right.

The right to quality healthcare is not an exclusive right for those who are rich with big pockets.

The right to quality healthcare is not a special right reserved for those who live in cities and suburbs.

Through Rural Health Matters Campaign, we are driving a message that our people in deep rural villages deserves the same quality healthcare as their counterparts in urban areas.

We are driving a message that even the poorest of the poor deserve the same quality healthcare as those who are super rich.

We are committed to achieving this objective by ensuring that our rural hospitals and clinics are properly equipped.

We are breathing life to this idea of universal access to quality healthcare by ensuring that our healthcare facilities are properly and adequately staffed.

Through this Campaign, we have recruited several specialists from other provinces to come to our province,

to assist us with complicated surgeries which are life changing.

We thank all these specialists who never say no to our invitation. Indeed, the spirit of community service lives in all of them.

Like true doctors, they have made the health and welfare of our patients a priority. They have refused to prioritise the glitters and the comfort of working in more urbanised areas.

We are doing all this also guided by the understanding that the right to good health is closely linked to the right to life itself.

This campaign will contribute significantly to our broader objective of reducing the backlog of surgeries in our hospitals.

Beyond this, we are also committed to reducing the burden of communicable diseases such as HIV and Tuberculosis,

We are committed to waging a relentless fight against lifestyle non-communicable diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

We have given a special attention to the task of reducing child and maternal deaths.

Programme Director

Today, I can speak with confidence and say that our public health system has experienced significant improvement over the last few years.

We have made remarkable recovery from the widely reported challenges of shortage of emergency vehicles, shortage of healthcare professionals, dilapidating infrastructure, and general shortage of critical equipment.

We have made wise and significant investments in human resource, infrastructure, and equipment.

We have also made significant strides in improving the availability and accessibility of medicines in our facilities.

All this is in line with our Health Turnaround Strategy which we adopted a few years ago.

In this regard, I also wish to thank our healthcare workers, every one of them, from our nurses and our doctors for playing their part.

The face of our public health system is changing for the better because you too are playing your role. We thank you for at times going beyond the ordinary call of duty. You are indeed the pillars that support our public healthcare system.

Our program of unannounced visits to healthcare facilities will continue.

The experience we gain from these visits helps us to introduce targeted and relevant interventions to our facilities. I know that patients are very happy with this monitoring approach.

Programme Director

Our message for today is that our dream of a better life for all, will be deferred to eternity, if we do not take care of our health.

Therefore, having gathered here today, I am reminded by what MEC Dr. Ramathuba use to say to us. She says that, Covid-19 diverted our attention so much that we nearly forgot about other killer diseases like TB, HIV, Cancer, to name but a few.

It is against the above-mentioned background Honourable Minister, that today, we need to intensify our fight against Breast Cancer and all other forms of cancer.

We need to educate our people, particularly women about this killer disease.

We know fully well that treatment of cancer depends it's stages. Which therefore means that awareness and early detection is crucial. It may consist of chemotherapy, radiation and surgery.

We need to spread the message that educate the population. With this we reiterate our scientific observation that, once cancer spreads, treatment becomes more complicated.

Programme Director

Without fear of repetition, please allow me to reflect thus:

Here in Limpopo, a study has been conducted, and it shows that 1 in 8 women has a risk of developing breast cancer.

That is why we should be vigilant and say one is one too many.

In South Africa, breast Cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer for South African women of all races, with a life time risk of 1 in 27.

To date, 1, 7 million of women are diagnosed of breast cancer each year, and 1 in 26 women are at risk of developing breast cancer , and 16% of cancer deaths are attributed to it.

Globally about 287,850 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women and it is estimated that 43, 250 women and 530 men will die of breast cancer.

Africa currently had the highest age-standardized breast cancer, and the mortality rate globally, with the Sub-Saharan African sub-region is alarming.

That is why I am saying a healthy nation is a winning nation.

Our victory lies in our unity.

Programme Director

There is no victory in laziness. Victory and hard work are the best cousins.

I want to conclude by urging women here, and women across our province to go for check-ups for Breast Cancer. Remember early detection can save your life.

Let us adopt a habit of regular health check-ups. Let us remember that early detection of any disease means an opportunity for early treatment or management.

Let us do it today, and beyond today.

I thank you.

Inkomu!

Nda!

Kea Leboga!