



# LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Department  
SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE  
OFFICE of the MEC

## REMARKS DELIVERED BY MEC KENANA ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL MOTHER TONGUE CELEBRATIONS IN MALAMULELE

Tuesday, 21 February 2023

### Program director

Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality: Cllr. Dowelani Nenguda –  
Mayor of the Collins Chabane Local Municipality, Cllr. Shadrack Maluleke  
DDG - Department of Sport, Arts and Culture; Dr CN Khumalo  
Chairperson of the National Library of South Africa, Ms R Mabaso  
Basic Education District Director: Dr N Rambiyana  
University of Venda representative: Dr C Hlugwane  
Colleagues in the Social Cluster  
All honored guests present here today.  
School children and your educators  
Our traditional leaders

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today we gather here on the “**International Mother Language Day**” diverse as we are, yet the same as human.

We may differ because of our languages but we are one people.

As a people, we ought to pride ourselves with being diverse with our beautiful, but different languages.

Our languages are something that we have inherited from our forefathers and help us to define ourselves in our day to day lives.

Our languages help us to pass our heritage to the coming generations.

Therefore, without a language, one could feel that they may not have a sense of belonging.

You may equally feel that you have no identity and find it difficult to introduce yourself to other people of different culture.

So, this day did not come by default, but it was introduced deliberately to remind us that we, are the languages that we speak.

We cannot shy away from the fact that many of our languages are fast becoming endangered as some are taking up significant percentages of the world's speakers. With languages like English taking preference, indigenous languages are slowly being used less as there isn't a large demand for these languages to be used in a global perspective.

But that should not be the case.

Ladies and gentlemen, we should fight tooth and nail to preserve our mother tongues so as to help in the intellectual development of children and boost intellectual and cognitive development. Many academics argue that there are better employment opportunities if you are bilingual or multilingual, and for the children at school, it could boost their confidence as speaking your mother tongue gives one a sense of pride.

Let us also talk to the importance of learning other people's languages.

*“Kuna ku vuyeriwa ko tala eka kuva u vulavula tindzimi to tala kutlula ku tiva ririmi ra manana wa wena ntsena”*

There are more advantages in being multilingual than just knowing you mother language.

South Africa is vast and has 11 official languages and is far in advance in introducing sign language as the 12<sup>th</sup> official language.

I call to action leaders of our societies and parents, to play their different roles in harnessing our languages, tradition and heritage so that the trend we see of today, wherein young people fail to speak their own languages.

In 2006, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture resolved to implement and fund a project to reprint books which were considered classics in indigenous languages. I urge our teachers and parents to get their hands on those books which are directed to, amongst others, promote reading in indigenous languages, preserve indigenous languages and ensure that everyone has a book to read in his/her mother tongue.

Ladies and gentlemen, promoting mother tongue-based education with a growing understanding of its importance, particularly in early development education, and being more committed to its development in society.

This year, the The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO commemorates the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its bold statement that 'no discrimination can be made on the basis of language', and celebrates its translation into more than 500 languages.

The United Nations' sustainable goal number 4 of 17 talks of the *assurance of inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. In attaining that goal, we need to move along the footsteps of equitable quality education in a subject taught in mother tongue for its preservation.

I emphasize the term "preservation" because the freedom we have today to speak of language freely did not come cheap.

Let me remind you of our painful past. Let me remind you of June 16, 1976. A day that which "language" led to the death of at least 176 learners in Soweto.

On that fateful morning, between 10,000 and 20,000 black students, who mostly spoke native languages, walked from their schools to Orlando Stadium for a rally to protest having to learn in Afrikaans in school. The introduction of Afrikaans alongside English as a medium of instruction is considered the immediate cause of the Soweto uprising, but there are a various factors behind the 1976 student unrest, of course.

That generation fought, and now the baton has been tossed to us. We need to fight for the preservation of our languages through active participation. Yes!! The weapon is our participation. We have the freedom. We just need to make sure that we take up available resources within our schools and society that lead to that preservation.

To the young ones, as they now move to tertiary institutions of higher learning, they should know that there is a Language Policy Framework for Higher Education Institutions which is embedded within the principles which must guide the interpretation and application of that policy.

Among them, the promotion of access and success in the academic enterprise of public higher education institutions; and the recognition and respect of the linguistic and cultural diversity that exist at South African higher education institutions.

It is as such that the government has through the very white paper, moved to value all indigenous languages as sources of knowledge, capable of informing learning of the different disciplines in higher education; The value of collaborative partnerships to promote multilingualism; Commitment to the promotion of language equity; equality and fairness; and finally the commitment to the development and promotion of indigenous languages to redress past injustices.

As I conclude, allow me to call all of us to action on the fight against Gender Based Violence and Femicide. Use your language to report any matter you feel uncomfortable with to law enforcement agencies. We equally call on those enforcement agencies, to use the language they know best, of investigating, arresting perpetrators, and successfully prosecuting all those guilty of such hideous crimes.

I thank you!