

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, MR. CHUPU STANLEY MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE PROVINCIAL YOUTH DAY, HELD AT MDABULA STADIUM COLLINS CHABANE MUNICIPALITY.

16 June 2023

Programme Director

Members of the Executive Council, our MECs;

Speaker of the Provincial Legislature, Mma Rosemary Molapo;

Members of the Provincial Legislature;

Leaders of all Political Parties present here today;

Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality;

Mayor of Collins Chabane Local Municipality;

Executive Mayors and all Mayors of our Municipalities;

All Councillors present;

Our Esteemed Traditional Leaders present here today;

Leadership of Youth and Students Organisations;

Representatives of our Civil Society Organisations;

Members of the Media;

Young People of Limpopo;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Avuxeni!

Ndi masiare!

Programme Director

Please allow me to start by thanking all the young people of our beautiful province, Limpopo, for responding in large numbers to our call for this important celebration of National Youth Day.

As the Premier of Limpopo, I am deeply honoured to be part of this historic occasion, that marks 47 years since the 1976 Students Uprising.

My delight is also escalated by the fact that we have today gathered at the Mdabula Stadium of the Collins Chabane Local Municipality.

This place has a historic meaning to all of us. This is a municipality duly named after one of our own revolutionary, a gallant fighter, the political animal, a true soldier of our liberation struggle, son of the soil, the late Collins Chabane. May his revolutionary soul forever rest in peace.

It is in this context as we salute the late Collins Chabane, that we are reminded that today is about paying tribute to the selfless sacrifices made by the young people of 1976 for us to attain freedom and democracy.

It is against this background that the youth month programme here in Limpopo is also dedicated to honour the fallen heroes and heroines of our struggle for liberation, who on the 16th of June 1976, mobilized and got involved in various liberation battle fronts of the liberation struggle.

In one voice, we are saying that the year 2023 is an important year in the political life and calendar of our country. From its darkest and

treacherous past, both under colonialism and later apartheid, South Africa has since the advent of democracy in 1994, designated June month to celebrate the role played by the youth in the liberation of our country.

We will forever be indebted to that generation of youth, who were inspired by the noble ideal of wanting to be free politically, socially, culturally and economically. In their multitudes, mainly Africans in townships and villages across the country, joined in solidarity the students of SOWETO in 1976 to contribute to the liberation of the country from the oppressive white minority regime.

As the epoch of this historic political event shows, and noting the lull and dull moment in political opposition to apartheid due to the banning of liberation formations, the youths of South Africa seized the moment to close the gap and took to the streets to protest against the unjust laws under the apartheid regime.

The heroic acts of these youths have been engraved in the passage of history as been a collective act out of a progressive generation that has displayed heroism in their determination to opposing all forms of social injustices brought about by the illegitimate apartheid regime.

The 1976 uprising against apartheid demonstrated that no force can defeat people who are united in the fight for their land, wealth, families, freedom and their very survival.

It is in this context that as a province, we join others across the length and breadth of our beautiful country, in collective recognition of our

patriotic youth who fought for their land, families, wealth , freedom and their very survival.

Informed and guided by a deep sense of conviction and common purpose, they waged a relentless defiance campaigns to push back the atrocious policies of the white minority regime.

The 1976 uprising was not merely a rebellion against Afrikaans as an imposed medium of instruction, but was a revolutionary act of liberation.

The 1976 generation demonstrated that if young people can come together and consolidate their position in society, no regime or force can stop them.

The unity of a generation such as those in 1976 is a clear demonstration that generational unity is an essential tool in bringing about change and restoration of our dignity as Africans.

It is therefore on this important note that, the commemoration of this youth month should not be a mere public relations exercise to eclipse the socio-economic challenges faced by our youth, rather it is a pragmatic effort to galvanise the youth in a straggle to defend and deepen democracy.

Programme Director

The 2023 commemoration of the Youth Day is taking place at a time when our country and the globe is facing harsher than expected socio-economic conditions.

The recent unemployment figures paints a bleak picture. As a country we have recorded 32.9 per cent unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2023 and it is also referred to as among the highest in the world.

Youth unemployment rate has increased by 1.1 per cent points in the first quarter of 2023, to 46,5 per cent, according the Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey.

Indeed, this is a gloomy picture that cannot be appreciated or allowed to lift its ugly head in our life time, particularly during this administration.

As we speak, youth unemployment has become a new pandemic that we must fight together and defeat. We simply cannot afford to be defeated by this phenomenon of youth unemployment.

We must work together as government, organisations representing young people and the business community to find lasting solutions to youth unemployment.

In addition to that, the implementation of load shedding by ESKOM negatively impact on our economic growth plans.

To this end many businesses have since reported loss of revenues, while others shed off their labour force due to load shedding.

The impact of all of this is the growing levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality. As a developmental state we simply cannot afford this situation to continue.

We are however motivated by the strides our government is making, particularly through the newly appointed minister of Electricity, Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa.

We are confident that government intervention guided by the National Energy Action plan, will resolve the energy crisis in our country once and for all.

On our part as Limpopo, we have since pronounced about the Provincial Energy Strategy. Today, we are calling upon interested youth to gear themselves towards the implementation of the strategy.

We are confident that thousands of jobs, particularly for youth, women and people with disabilities, will be created as we embark on the implementation of the renewable energy sources in Limpopo.

Programme Director

It is therefore against this background that, in commemorating the youth month this year, government has noted that it is the 29 years since the advent of democracy and as such, youth month commemoration is used not only to give hope to young people, however, we need to pronounce on the actual opportunities for the youth to improve the quality of their lives and unlock their full potential.

It is on this important note that we have since committed ourselves to the noble idea of youth development, as such, we are here to remind young people about a series of empowerment projects available as part of the Limpopo Development Plan, guided by the Provincial Socio-Economic Recovery Plan.

As government we have tailored some initiatives to mitigate the challenge of youth unemployment.

Just day before yesterday during our special Executive Council meeting, we have since directed all the provincial departments to fill the more than 4 thousand 500 hundred funded vacant posts in the provincial government.

This directive follows the decision by EXCO which was held last month in May, to order all provincial departments to embark on an assessments of their employment status, as a direct response to the country's high unemployment rate in the main and in response to Cabinet's call for the professionalisation of the public service.

The recent EXCO resolved to closely monitor the implementation of the filling of all the 4 500 plus funded vacant posts in Limpopo, with specific focus towards benefiting the youth, women and people with disabilities.

- In the same vein, I am pleased to announce that, more than 2000 posts have been advertised by the Limpopo Provincial Government during the past six months. We hope that the youth, women and people with disabilities are being prioritised when appointments for this positions are finalised.

In addition, government continue to roll out a massive skills development programme targeting the youth. This programme relates to the provision of both financial and non-financial support to young entrepreneurs.

Similarly, we will also expand our roll out of learner-ship and internship programmes for young graduates, this as a way of giving them necessary workplace experience.

I want to say to you as young people of our province that 'the future belongs to those who are willing to work for it and meet it halfway'.

Your government and various stakeholders are forever ready to partner with you on the route towards economic freedom in your lifetime.

Programme Facillitator

We have youth empowerment activities tailor made to propel our youth to wage an economic struggle against unemployment, poverty and inequality.

In this context, we have championed a youth friendly policy ecosystem that allows and guide our province towards key priorities that must be undertaken to empower and develop the youth.

To date, the provincial government has developed and adopted the Limpopo Youth DEVELOPMENT strategy and the Limpopo Preferential Procurement strategy.

Recently, I handed over a site to a contractor for the construction of the first ever, multi facet, provincial central academic hospital which I have alluded to during the State of the Province Address in February this year.

The construction of this central academic hospital is estimated to create 1 thousand 2 hundred and 20 jobs during construction and a further 2 thousand 4 hundred and 61 full time jobs.

In addition, Limpopo has recently launched the Limpopo Youth Fund in collaboration with the National Youth Development Agency.

The Limpopo Youth Fund Steering Committee will also be financing the awarding of financial aid to hundreds of youth entrepreneurs this month of June, were the 10 million rand set aside to support youth business initiatives will be distributed accordingly.

The Limpopo Youth Fund with NYDA will be recapitalised for the three successive financial years and we will also engage other institutions to also contribute funds to support youth in their localities. We are reiterating our clarion call to all the young people of Limpopo to leverage opportunities that are being presented through these initiatives.

Furthermore, as Limpopo, we have since committed ourselves towards inclusive economic growth and we have singled out infrastructure development projects as our economic trajectory.

Based on that, we have selected the Musina Makhado and the Fetakgomo Tubatse Special Economic Zones as our catalytic economic developmental projects.

It was during both the State of the Province Address and the subsequent Budget Vote by the respective MEC, that more details regarding the benefits carried by these projects to young people, women and people living with disabilities were unleashed.

These two projects are expected to create thousands jobs opportunities during both construction and operational phases.

On the very same note, we are pleased that preparations for the fast rail project between Limpopo and Gauteng are continuing as planned.

Currently, both the administration of Limpopo and Gauteng are busy finalising the required paper work, which will be followed by the signing of the Memorandum of Implementation by myself and Premier Lesufi of Gauteng.

We are reporting about the rail link project in addition to others because, it is going to contribute thousands of jobs for young people during both construction and implementation phases.

We are very much confident that the Special Economic Zone projects, the construction of the provincial central academic hospital and the fast rail project, counted together with other infrastructure developmental projects, will contribute immensely to the much needed jobs in Limpopo.

Programme Director

Through the implementation of the Industrial Parks Revitalisation programme in all the five districts of Limpopo, we are creating over 6,000 jobs.

Already, the Critical Infrastructure Programme has approved R49,9million funding for the Seshego Industrial Park to refurbish the structure of 11 factories.

We are also having a Human Capital Investment Strategy in place. The value of the strategy is to facilitate opportunities for youth with SETA's. On this note again, we are looking at the creation of hundreds of youth entrepreneurs.

Similarly, our economic recovery route rests mainly, although not only, on the number of jobs we are able to generate in our leading sectors and support for SMMEs.

We are pleased to report that, during the 2022/2023 financial year, we have exceeded our target for supporting SMMEs that helped sustained up to 1,000 jobs.

In addition, a total of R4,4 million worth of loans were disbursed to support SMMEs and co-operatives. A total of just over 13,000 local enterprises received assistance throughout the province.

We shall continue to support 100 SMMEs and 100 co-operatives in 2023/2024 financial year.

We are pleased that in collaboration with the NYDA, we have succeeded to identify opportunities for our youth in various sectors of the economy.

The youth of our province are also benefiting from products and services offered by the NYDA such as grant fund and other business development support programmes.

Throughout this month and beyond, I am mandating all the provincial government departments, its agencies and all our municipalities, to ensure that they exhibit all the available youth empowerment opportunities at their disposal.

We commit ourselves to ensure that the fruits of democracy are tasted by everyone. That democracy become a lived reality and not just a distant dream.

I am also reminding young people that the year 2024 will be the year marking 30 years of freedom and democracy in South Africa. The term of the fifth administration will be coming to an end.

As government, we are proud of the work that has been done to create an enabling environment for our youth to develop in their areas of interests.

We further note that more still need to be done to uplift our youth from all forms of social ills, but our gains shows that we are a government that cares for our people, especially our youth.

I call upon all young people to access free education through NSFAS;

I invite young people to intensify their interests regarding Agricultural revitalization programmes in the province, and fight poverty;

I urge youth to familiarize themselves in their thousands to infrastructure development programmes and benefit immensely:

Young people of Limpopo are hereby informed that there are opportunities in all our economic and social sectors, the only thing needed is dedication and commitment to rise and be counted.

Programme Facillitator

We are quite aware that soon the IEC will be embarking on voter registration prpgrammes. We therefore encourage youth to register, then vote during the day of election, and vote correctly to ensure that we continue with the transformation agenda in an uninterrupted manner.

As the late Moses Kotane once said that the future of our country is in your hands and it depends on what you make use of it. I am calling upon young people to rise and be counted.

Young people of Limpopo must lead the fight against unemployment, poverty and inequality;

Young people in Limpopo must lead the fight against gender based violence and femicide;

Young people of Limpopo must lead the fight against alcohol and drug abuse;

Young people of Limpopo must lead the infrastructure development trajectory;

Young people in Limpopo must use the Fourth Industrial Revolution and rise;

Lastly, young people in Limpopo must respond constructively to Antonio Gramsci when he challenged and said, the old refuses to die and the young refuses to be born.

This is because it was Frantz Fanon who said that “Each generation must discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it, in relative opacity.” I know that you have defined your mission as economic freedom in your lifetime.

With those few words. I wish you a prosperous and fulfilling National Youth Day.

I thank you!