

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE LIMPOPO PREMIER MR. CHUPU STANLEY
MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF LEPHALALE SOLAR PROJECT BY EXARRO
MINE.

16th November 2023

Programme Director, Mr Leonard Legodi;
The CEO of Exxaro Mining South Africa, Dr Nombasa Tsengwa;
The MEC of LEDET, Mr. Rodgers Monama;
The Executive Mayor of Waterberg District Municipality, Cllr Morris Mataboge;
The Mayor of Lephalale Local Municipality, Cllr Abram Mokgehle;
Head of Project Management in the Private Office of the President of RSA, Mr Rudi
Dicks;
Our Esteemed Traditional Leaders present here today;
Representative of Faith Based Organisations;
Managing Director of Cennergi Subsidiary, Mr Leon Groenewald;
The Captains of the Industry as Invited;
Representatives of the Local Business Formations;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me take this opportunity to project my words of appreciation to the leadership of Exxaro Mining South Africa, and indicate that I am very thrilled to form part of this significant milestone on behalf of the Limpopo Provincial Government.

On this important note, please allow me to state upfront that we have been following the developments which has today led to this ground-breaking sod turning ceremony.

From the signing of Memorandum to develop wind farms in 2009, to the bidding of Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme, until Cennergi became a full subsidiary of Exxaro, which today we are here with you witnessing the mission fulfilled.

This is indeed the confirmation of the African proverb which says, "If You Want To Go Fast, Go Alone. If You Want To Go Far, Go Together."

This is the road we have traversed together on the lane of Public Private Partnership in a quest to drive economic growth, create sustainable socio-economic development, and further create much needed jobs through cleaner and greener renewable energy.

Programme Facilitator,

I must confess upfront that it was a great news when I heard the National Energy Regulator of South Africa, announcing the approval of sixteen power projects, with a combined capacity of 211 MW.

Fifteen of the project applications were for solar Photo Voltaic plants, and one was for a wind farm, which amongst them was this biggest registered project of 80 MW solar plant by Lephalale Solar Project, which we are celebrating here today.

It makes me feel so good that amidst the ongoing energy crisis our country is currently experiencing, Limpopo is amongst the earliest birds to be connected to Eskom's grid through this project as implemented by Exxaro Mining.

We also applaud NERSA for having taken the application as a matter of urgency and finalizing the application in a short space of time.

Programme Director,

The colleagues from energy regulator will agree with me when I say that our country is endowed with abundance of solar resources, making it a prime location for the development of solar energy projects.

This achievement of the Lephalale Solar Project will immensely contribute to the country set target of generating 18 Gigawatt of renewable energy by 2030, with solar energy expected to make up a significant portion of this target.

Similarly, government's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement program, has been successful in attracting investment and supporting the development of solar energy projects in the country.

Notably, the Lephalale Solar Project is a case in point. We wait with anticipation and eagerness for its multiplier effect in the province, while bolstering the energy supply of the Grootegeluk Mine.

The Cennergi's decarbonization process through Lephalale Solar Project, will not only contribute to Exxaro's conglomerate plan of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050.

However, this will also enable government's goals to reduce its carbon emission by 42 per cent in 2025, contribute positively to the socio-economic developmental goals, and will also serve as a positive enabler towards the global greenhouse emission targets to avoid consequences of climate change.

On the same vein, as Limpopo, considering the energy crisis countrywide, we have unveiled the Limpopo Renewable Energy Strategy Action Plan. Through this plan, we aim to deal with this crisis through generation of wind and solar power to contribute into the national grid.

It is in this spirit that we are reminded of the address at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation in 2021, by President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China, who asserted that:

“Working together, all of us can embark on a path of green, low-carbon and sustainable development.

We need to gain an accurate understanding of what sustainable development means, put the people first, and strike a balance between economic growth, ensuring people's well-being, and energy conservation and emissions reduction.

This will enable us to catalyse green transition in the course of economic development and achieve greater development through green transition.”

it is therefore our conviction as these current echelon to traverse this epoch, as it will translate into the growth of the province's economy and create more needed jobs, particularly to the women and youth.

Programme Director,

We stand in front of you with sense of alacrity and optimism that today's unveiling of Cennergi's 68MW Solar plant, will be able to make a huge relief during both the construction and completion phase, on job creation particularly to our people around Lephale.

We warmly welcome the commitment made by the Exxaro that part of the Lephale Solar Project's revenue percentage, will be contributing to the socio-economic upliftment of the local communities as part of its corporate social responsibility.

Such commitment is warmly welcomed by us as the leadership of the province, because we are guided by the National and Limpopo Development Plans. Our commitment is that growing the economy of the province, must be centred around the promotion and the socio-economic development of our people in general.

This is crucial to our wider effort to create employment, eradicate poverty, and eliminate uneven development as part of our contribution to build a prosperous South Africa.

Programme Director,

While I am still on the emotive issue of unemployment in our country, please allow me to share my consolation emanating from the release of the Quarter 3 Labour Force Survey, as released by the Statistician General, Mr Risenga Maluleke, this week on the 14th November 2023.

The report states that Limpopo continues to enjoy a great share of the number of persons employed since Quarter 1, with 70,000 jobs created in Quarter 3.

It continues to state, 'on the year-on-year basis, Limpopo has created a remarkable 202,000 jobs, becoming the third biggest province to create jobs in South Africa.

For me, this is a worthy testament to our commitment as Limpopo towards economic recovery path and the reduction of unemployment.

For me all accolades must go to the public private partnerships, mainly because, this means that our joint efforts towards fighting the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality have yielded positive results.

Today we are celebrating the reduction in general unemployment, as well as a reduction by a percentage point in the Extended Unemployment Rate. This therefore translate into a morale boost as we traverse this trajectory of socio-economic development together.

Similarly, Limpopo is below the national average of 31.9% and now stands at 30.8% unemployment rate. This is a small yet significant achievement, and we must continue to build on this momentum.

As government, we vow never to become complacent. We commit to continue our efforts to attract investment, promote entrepreneurship and create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive.

It is in the same breadth that we also learnt from the Statistician General about the number of young people who are leaving the province at their prime age to seek employment in other provinces, particularly Gauteng.

We are saying that our offerings here in Limpopo should create conditions that should retain such workforce to build a province that we all yearn for.

In addition, i call upon all role players to invest in the development of our human capital. It is my conviction that education and skills development are key drivers of economic growth and social development.

I wish to reiterate my long held view that as the current generation of leadership, we must ensure that our schools are adequately resourced, our teachers are well-trained, and our students have access to quality education, that responds to the needs of the economy.

Hence it should be our collective responsibility to promote technical and vocational training to equip our youth with the skills needed for the job market

Programme Director,

We have recently held the Limpopo 3rd edition Investment conference. It was during this conference and others, where we showcased the strategic advantages and opportunities that Limpopo offers.

Amongst our offerings we included the strategic advantages and opportunities in the mining value chain, minerals beneficiation, linked with manufacturing development and industrialisation agro-processing, coupled with developing the entire agricultural value chain; the hydrogen economy and tourism.

This initiative by Exxaro Mining of playing a role in clean energy transition, and contributing to the reduction of carbon emissions, protecting the environment, while driving economic growth, is very sacrosanct to the mentioned strategic opportunities Limpopo offers.

Carbon emission destroys the vegetation, reduce food supply through destruction of the agricultural crops and livestock, due to the abnormal rising temperatures and floods as result of climate change.

The preservation of the environment in this regard is precondition for sustainable economic development which we all seek to achieve.

It is in the context of the above, that I would like to conclude my input by borrowing the progressive words alluded by the Ghanaian diplomat and former Secretary-General of United Nations, Kofi Annan, during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, Johannesburg, when he said:

“We look to the environment for the food and fuel, and the medicines and materials, that our societies depend on.

We look to it as a realm of beauty, and of spiritual sustenance. But let us not be deceived, when looking at a clear blue sky, into thinking that all is well.

All is not well. Science tells us that if we do not take the right action now, climate change will bring havoc, even within our lifetime”.

I THANK YOU ALL!