

# **ADDRESS BY PREMIER STANLEY MATHABATHA DURING 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF FREEDOM – SEKORORO, CALAIS STADIUM**

27 April 2024

Programme Director

MEC for Sports, Arts and Culture

All Members of the Executive Council

Executive Mayor of Mopani District Municipality

Executive Mayors and Local Mayors Present Present

Senior Government Officials

Representatives of Political Parties in our Legislature

Traditional Leaders, Representatives of Faith Based Organizations

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Avuxeni; Thobela; Ndimatsheloni

I am honoured to join you today on this important occasion in which we commemorate the 30th anniversary of our freedom.

We have assembled here in the beautiful district of Mopani throughout the Province to celebrate an historic day during which we rededicate ourselves to the building of a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society.

It is on this important day in our national calendar, that we do not only celebrate the birth of a new nation which took place on this day.

But we have also gathered here together with other fellow South Africans across the country, to pay tribute to the heroes and heroines of our struggle for liberation, who made it possible that freedom and democracy is attained.

On this day, we also remember and salute our brothers and sisters on the African continent, and our friends across the world, whose solidarity made it possible for us to defeat apartheid, a crime against humanity.

We single out and salute the people of Russia and Cuba, who through their determined struggles and efforts, ensured that South Africans today have the possibility to build a just, united and prosperous country.

We also came to celebrate the resilient spirit of South Africans, for rising above their differences, and embrace one another as a united nation.

We celebrate this day because we know very well what it means to be enslaved and oppressed, disenfranchised and dispossessed, exiled and imprisoned.

Similarly, we know what entail forced removals and banishment, as well as assassinations and massacres.

On this day of celebration, we also came together not only to mark this momentous journey traversed for the past three decades, but we have gathered here to affirm the commitment that has been pronounced for the past thirty years, of building a better life for all.

We have convened here, to also strengthen and advance the gains of our democracy.

While tremendous progress has been made in transforming the lives of our people, by providing better services, reducing poverty, creating harmonious society, most of our people find themselves in abject poverty, dilapidated infrastructure, plagued by elements of racism which continues to rear their ugly heads and other crimes such as gender based violence.

Therefore, we use this day as a reminder, as I have alluded to, that we make call and pledge to sustain the national effort that brought about freedom, which is critical in consolidating our democracy and promoting non-sexism and non-racialism.

We are also calling on all South Africans to unite and defeat poverty, inequality and unemployment.

All of us must work in partnership for a better future. We should work with our social partners, as we did the past three decades, to promote economic growth and empowerment of our communities.

Programme Director,

It is against this background, that we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the dawn of democracy under the theme:

***“30 Years of Democracy, partnership and growth”.***

This constitutes a call to all of us to unite in action, to work together in advancing democracy and development for our people.

Like we did 30 years ago, we need to ensure that we realise our common dream of building a better life for all South Africans.

The important progress we have made in the reconstruction and development of our country and our communities since 1994, is an achievement that belongs to all of us in collaboration.

The significant progress in improving the quality of the lives of the majority of the poorest of our people, must encourage us to move with greater speed to bring a better life to all our people.

As we meet to celebrate our freedom we again say: much more should still be done, over a period of time.

This momentous celebration is taking place at the time when our country, from its length and breadth, will be going to the national and provincial election in the next month.

The national elections will be taking place in tandem with the celebration of the thirty years of freedom in our country, and also celebrating 28 years since the enactment of our constitution, which has been a shelter to all South Africans hitherto.

As the Provincial government, we are towards the end of the sixth administration, ushering the seventh administration.

Our journey catalogues a significant transformation of our people, from establishing a sound and effective government, to the provision of service delivery after many years of deprivation and marginalization.

Under the leadership of the African National Congress, we are indeed proud of the significant progress we have made.

We have made significant strides for the past 30 Years in responding to the needs and expectations of the people of Limpopo.

We started by laying the foundation for a single, inclusive, and integrated province.

Secondly, we altered the economic conditions of our people, upgrading them socially, affirming their belonging to this beautiful province and country.

The journey we have travelled has been characterized by transformation and development in critical areas.

In the economy and the provision of public goods and services, like water, electricity, roads, education, health and houses.

In 1994 when democracy was achieved, less than 30 per cent of rural households had access to electricity. Today, we have electrified at least 94.6 per cent of rural households in Limpopo, marking a significant improvement in access to electricity.

We are also pleased that the commitment that was made by Honourable President in his State of the Nation Address of ending load shedding is coming to a reality.

The recent census report shows that 69.1 per cent of our households have access to water.

However, amid growth in the number of households, 20.5 per cent of our households have not yet been connected to piped water.

In addition, lack of adequate bulk infrastructure and reticulation capacity remain a significant challenge in ensuring universal access to water.

It is for this reason that, together with all our district municipalities, we made a commitment that water crises must be resolved with speed, because access to potable water is a human right, which this freedom has brought forward.

Limpopo has seen growth in investments. Our annual investment conferences, beginning with the first in 2021, have contributed over R280 billion in investment pledges.

The difference that these pledges brought about is reflected in their immediate implementation.

These investments include mining, agriculture, agro-processing, green energy, property development, as well as trade, catering and accommodation.

Rising investment is a sign of confidence and important for us to address unemployment and poverty.

The provincial government has implemented enterprise development and support programmes.

These programmes support local enterprises, including small, micro and medium enterprises, as well as co-operatives.

We achieved this through access to finance, markets, training, and essential business equipment.

We have established partnerships with organisations such as Impact Catalyst, Coca Cola Business South Africa, and the SAB Foundation, to implement enterprise development programmes, targeting youth, women, people living with disability, and graduates interested in new venture creation.

Compatriots,

Over the past years, we have witnessed the tremendous improvement in the healthcare infrastructure starting with the upgrades of various hospitals and the construction of new medical facilities, ensuring that our communities have access to quality healthcare services.

In order to optimize access to health facilities, we have also handed over ambulances to various districts in the province.

During the previous financial year, we fulfilled our commitment and purchased 566 new ambulances, which are now taking care of our people in Limpopo.

Similarly, we have made remarkable strides, in reducing the HIV positivity rate among the 15 to 24 years age group from 1.9 per cent to 1.3 per cent.

This surpassed our target. Our Antiretroviral Therapy has expanded, ensuring broader access to HIV treatment.

Mother to Child Transmission has been reduced as well. Our efforts in TB treatment and maternal healthcare have positioned Limpopo as a provincial leader in these areas.

Through the department of education, we have rolled out massive infrastructure development in schools, which were dilapidated due to severe storms.

Schools such as Nrwadi Secondary School in Vhembe and Khetho Nxumalo here in Mopani, Giyani village are the examples of such initiatives.

We continue to move our children out of mud schools and terrible pit latrines.

The ANC led government has since the dawn of democracy introduced feeding schemes and scholar transport for the learners.

As well as the provision of stationaries, and the benefits of no fee schools, disadvantaged families no longer need to worry about providing quality education for their children.

Such commitment is evident in the performance of our learners in schools.

In addition, the ANC government is proud of the massive impact of the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

Through this commitments, we fear no contradiction as we say, Tintswalo is well catered for by this government.

In the same spirit, our commitment to the well-being and care of older persons has been unwavering.

Through our efforts, 533 older persons now have access to residential facilities, and 13,665 benefit from community-based care and support services.

Equally, we have championed the rights and well-being of persons with disability, providing care for 294 people in residential facilities.

We have ensured that 3,514 have access to services in protective workshops.

Limpopo remains youthful, with a greater proportion of our population still between 18 and 34 years old.

This calls on us to strengthen programmes that will address the challenge of youth not in employment, education or training.

The programmes include our Youth Development Strategy, skills development, placements in work, and youth empowerment.

In the same spirit, I am pleased to report that the Provincial government, will announce key interventions on youth development programmes on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2024.

Programme Director,

The aforementioned milestones are not a validation that we have done enough, nor we should remain complacent.

They serves as a message of courage to all of us that together, we have achieved a lot, and we should continue to work in partnership, as we did in the past.

Together, we can cement our gains, work for the improvement of aspirations of our people, towards total emancipation of our people, socially, politically, culturally and economically.

We have made progress in abolishing crime and corruption, creating safer communities as the province, however, worrisome part is the continuation of acts of gender based violence and femicide in our communities.

These barbaric acts continue to rear their ugly heads and undermine the freedom of our people.

I am pleased that this government, has passed laws that will enable the enforcement and prosecution of such acts of abuse.

We have recently joined Parliament and Takuwanii Rimme, in launching the Programme of Action that seeks to curb and abolish such social ills.

In this Programme of Action, we involved many stakeholders including traditional leaders.

This milestone serves as a clarion call that we should together as government, business, labour, civil society and communities work towards prosperity and just society.

As we celebrate our freedom, let us strengthen these partnerships that have helped us to improve the quality of life of many of our people in the last thirty years.

We must work together, to fight against the sinister attempts that seeks to undermine the unity of our nation through acts of racism, through attacks on foreign nationals, and in the open display of the old South African flag.

Out of respect for our Constitution – and in defence of our freedom – we reject racism, we reject the pledging of allegiance to a racist past and its symbols.

We reject attacks on those who have sought refuge in our country, and we reject violence, insurrection and disregard for the rule of law.

In the recent past, we have seen some acts of racist attacks in Groblersdal, Sekhukhune area, as well as racist commentary about black people.

All these and others indicate that we still have pockets of backwardness in our country that we must confront.

As we continue with our efforts of nation building and creating a national democratic society, we should do that in passion, diligence and patriotism noting the fact that freedom was never free.

In our quest to build and strengthen this democracy, we remain indebted to our forebears who dedicated their lives to the freedom we enjoy today.

Limpopo province is a better place to live because it has given birth to the conscious and dedicated heroes and heroines who sacrificed their lives for our prosperity.

I talk of men and women, who joined the struggle when it was not easy and fashionable. The torchbearers who left their country and crossed the borders without knowing who will bath or cloth them.

As we mark and celebrate 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of freedom, we pay special tribute to the brave Ntate Richard Pharephare Mothupi who left the country for military training to liberate our people.

He played an important role in fighting for workers rights and building of civic organizations.

We also remember the likes of Mama Charlotte Maxeke, whose life is synonymous with the struggle of the poor women emancipation.

As we celebrate this important day, which should also celebrate the life lived by the likes of Peter Nchabeleng, Mme Madinoge, Elias Moretsele, Lawrence Phokanoka and Flag Boshielo, to mention few who confronted apartheid regime without any fear guided by the love of their people.

We remember the stalwarts who played a significant role in ushering democracy, and played a significant part in this province to build government and its institutions.

We remain indebted to the legacy laid by Phandelani Ramagoma, Ntate Ratshitanga, Mme Lydia Komape, and their generations.



As we celebrate this important day, we also pay tribute to the generation of 1976, political activists who joined the struggle against repressive apartheid colonialism, from various political formations, to build a just society.

The thirty years of freedom is an inherited legacy of those who came before us, and we shall fight to preserve and continue with the good work of restoring the dignity of our people.

Indeed, freedom was never free. This democracy was paid through pain.

It was paid through blood and torture. through death and life imprisonment.

Today, we are in 30 years of freedom and democracy.

The best act to celebrate the sacrifices made, is to work in partnership to strive for the betterment of the lives of our people, by championing service delivery.

Programme Director and Compatriots,

As I have indicated earlier on that, as we celebrate thirty years of freedom and democracy, we also call upon all of you, young and old to go and participate in the coming election.

To exercise your right through voting for the government of your own choice, as you did in the past, to determine your destiny.

I also want to take this opportunity to pay credits to our traditional leaders, for playing an important role in our democracy, and creating better communities.

In addition, I also want to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to our respective traditional leaders, for running initiation schools in ways that make us the best in the country.

We wish the 2024 initiation season a great success, characterised by zero death.

Working together with traditional leaders, as the custodians of our culture and heritage, the provincial government will clamp down on illegal initiation schools.

I want to take this opportunity to wish all of you a happy freedom day.

In the same spirit, I also want to wish in advance, 'abasebenzi', the workers, a prosperous workers day, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2024.

With those few words, I say 'Let's do more together'.

**Kea Leboga**