

**SPEECH BY MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL FOR
PROVINCIAL TREASURY MR SEPARO SEKOATI AT THE
LIMPOPO COMMEMORATION OF AFRICA DAY,
UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO, 24 MAY 2024.**

24 MAY 2024

Programme Director, MEC Nakedi Kekana

Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Limpopo, Prof
Mahlo Mokgalong

His Excellency and Extraordinaire Ambassador of Nigeria to
South Africa, Mr Alexendra Tope Ajayi

Member of Executive Council Responsible for Limpopo
Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Mr Rogers
Monama

Executive Mayor of Polokwane Municipality, His Worship Cllr
John Mpe

Director General of the Limpopo Provincial Government, Mr
Nape Nchabeleng

Executive Director for Marketing and Communications at the
University of Limpopo, Mr Victor Kgomoeswana

Representatives of the University of Venda

Friends from the Media

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning!

It is with great pleasure and honour that I stand before you today to celebrate our Mother Continent in this beautiful Province of Limpopo. On behalf of the Premier of our province, allow me to say that Africa Day, both in spirit and intent, has always represented celebration of African unity. This celebration dates to the founding of the Organisation for African Unity in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1963, the predecessor to the African Union.

This year's Africa Day celebration is particularly significant as it coincides with the celebration of 30 Years of Freedom and Democracy in South Africa, hence our theme: "Celebrating 30 Years of Freedom: Building a Better Africa and a Better World". This theme recognised the three decades of our working to make Africa a better world, realising the struggles and achievement of our past. Such an achievement is indebted to our fallen heroes and heroines, our ancestors who worked as slaves, our mothers and grandmothers who were commonly employed as domestic servants and child-minders, and our forefathers who performed menial tasks at the expense of their humanity and pride.

As South Africans, celebrating thirty years of freedom and democracy, we remember and honour Pan-Africanist leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Henry Sylvester Williams, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Kenneth Kaunda, and many other African leaders who played an indelible role in building not only a proper Africa but also contributing immensely to the liberation of South Africa.

We, therefore, as Africans, focus on pursuing the ideals of the founding charters of the OAU and the African Union, and on giving effect to the aspirations of the AU Agenda 2063. The existence of the OAU and now the African Union has made significant strides in fostering peace, stability, economic growth, and establishing sound governance across member states despite the underlying challenges of underdevelopment.

Programme Director,

We should use this day, as we have in the past, to reaffirm the importance of consolidating democracy and good governance across Africa. We must continue to embrace and advance the principles and ideals set by NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism in engendering clean governance, partnership, and development for the entire continent.

As we celebrate in jubilation and continue our trajectory as a country committed to building a better Africa and a better world, we reaffirm our commitment to peacebuilding on the continent. We are part of efforts to resolve conflicts in regions such as the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, northern Mozambique, Sudan, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to mention a few.

We should strengthen our efforts to intensify regional integration through the capacitation of Regional Economic Communities in our continent, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Arab Maghreb Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), as the pillars of the African Union and continental prosperity.

We have seen in other parts of the world that integration is an important precondition for development, sustainable economic growth, raising the living standards of people, maintaining, and enhancing economic stability, fostering relations among member states, and contributing to the progress and development of the continent.

Together, as we work towards expediting the AU Agenda 2063, we must embrace the rich heritage and culture of Africa as major contributors to the continent's growth and transformation. Africa's rich and diverse heritage is a vehicle for promoting the economic and social development goals outlined in Africa's Agenda.

Looking at the potential of Africa through its various and rich mineral endowments, we should embrace regional integration through free trade to enhance growth and development. The African Continental Free Trade Area has huge potential in attracting investment to our respective countries.

We saw in our recent investment conference as a province that through our sector competitive advantage in tourism, agriculture, and mining, we have a huge potential for growing the economy by attracting a variety of investors from across the globe.

Programme Director,

As we commemorate this Africa Day, we commit ourselves to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and pursuing national policies that advance gender equality, reduce poverty,

inculcate sustainability into all aspects of our lives, and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

We should continue such efforts in partnership with various stakeholders, as we have witnessed the power of collaboration and cooperation in the past thirty years of our democracy and the six decades of the existence of the AU.

Today, we have gathered at this University to commemorate “30 years of freedom and democracy, in our quest to build a better Africa and the World.” We are grateful that the mission of this University resonates very well with our mission of building a better Africa, “Finding Solutions for Africa.”

We recognise your efforts in curbing and eradicating the proliferation of gender-based violence and femicide through your strategic initiatives of training GBVF ambassadors. Your work will contribute to our national strategic plan on eradicating gender-based violence and other social ills.

The universities of Venda and Limpopo, in collaboration with the Limpopo Provincial Government, are committed to advancing skills development in alignment with the African Agenda 2063. Through various educational programmes, research initiatives,

and partnerships with industries, these universities aim to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute effectively to the development and growth of the continent.

As I conclude, I want to take this opportunity to implore every one of you, in our journey to consolidate our democratic gains, here in Limpopo Province, to go and exercise your inalienable right to cast a ballot for the national and provincial elections which will be held on the 29th of May 2024.

As I wish all of us a prosperous and happy Africa Day, I would like to recite the words of the son of the soil, former president of this country, Patron Mvuyelwa Thabo Mbeki's poetic and courageous "I am an African" speech when he said:

"I am born of the peoples of the continent of Africa ...

The dismal shame of poverty, suffering, and human degradation of my continent is a blight that we share.

The blight on our happiness that derives from this and from our drift to the periphery of the ordering of human affairs leaves us in a persistent shadow of despair.

Whatever the setbacks of the moment, nothing can stop us now!

Whatever the difficulties, Africa shall be at peace!

However improbable it may sound to the skeptics, Africa will prosper!"

Because,
I am an African!

Thank you!