

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA ON HER ELECTION AS THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TO THE SPECIAL SITTING OF THE LEGISLATURE OF LIMPOPO.

14th of JUNE 2024

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Deputy Speaker,
The Provincial Secretary of ANC in Limpopo,
Honourable Members of this distinguished House,
Esteemed Members of the Judiciary,
Leaders of Opposition Parties,
Chairperson and members of the House of Traditional Leaders,
Stalwarts and veterans of our struggle,
Religious leaders,
Youth, women, business, labour and community leaders here present,
Leadership and Heads of Chapter nine institutions and all other institutions supporting our democracy,
Provincial Commissioner of the SAPS,
Director General and members of our Senior Management Service,
Media representatives,
Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,
The people of Limpopo,

It is my singular honour and a rare privilege to assume this responsibility entrusted upon me by the African National Congress and the people of my beloved province, Limpopo.

I am more than humbled by your faith and the confidence you have shown in me as the first democratically elected female Premier of this great province. Allow me to pay my gratitude to the esteemed leaders and members of this great movement, the ANC and the Alliance partners who are here today to witness this historic occasion.

I also want to thank my family especially my only surviving parent, my mother, my late father, friends, and comrades for offering me words of encouragement. I dare not fail.

Honorable Speaker

Allow me to take this opportunity to also pay a special homage and wish to dedicate this historic honor to the heroic women of our province who championed the struggle for the emancipation of the women against the triple challenges of poverty, gender-based violence and patriarchy still facing our women even today. These heroic women included amongst others the late Cde Joyce Mashamba, the late Mam Lydia Ngwenya-Komape, the late Cde Marie-Stella Sexwale-Mabitje, Cde Rejoice Mabudhafazi, Cde Maite Marutha, Cde Dikeledi

Magadzi, Cde Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, cde Cathrine Mabuza to mention but a few.

Honourable Speaker and members of the house,

I do not take this responsibility for granted. Your confidence in me has placed on my shoulders and those of other deployees a necessary burden to work diligently and tirelessly to change the lives of our people for the better.

I know it as a matter of fact, that my election today is not a personal feat, but a call to action.

I shall always strive to exercise my responsibilities with one thing in mind, that the people of Limpopo and their needs must always come first.

The word responsibility carries a dual, but complementary, meaning. In one sense it refers to the state of having a duty to deal with something. In another, it talks to the state of being accountable for something. It is my intention that a key defining feature of the seventh provincial administration shall be responsibility, a responsibility to create an environment conducive to the economic growth of our province and the socio-economic advancement of her people, tilted of course in favour of the most vulnerable among us. We also have a responsibility to remain accountable to those who brought us into this chamber and into public office.

As public representatives of the people of this province, we are also humbled by the unequivocal and solid voice of the citizens of Limpopo when they said Limpopo must once again be governed by the African National Congress. The people have indeed spoken. As the ANC we accept your overwhelming mandate, conscious of the service delivery challenges that lie ahead, and again we dare not fail.

It is in this context that we also welcome the official opposition, the EFF, and other parties in the opposition benches, the DA, the MK Party, the UAT and VF Plus.

Honourable members

We are called upon to work together to ensure that we create job opportunities for the jobless; that we accelerate the provision of houses for the homeless, above all, deliver water and electricity to the most needy in the vast farmlands and far-flung villages of Limpopo.

Underpinning our electoral mandate is also a responsibility to ensure the empowerment of young people through quality education and training. As President Oliver Tambo, “the nation that does not invest in its youth, does not deserve its future.”

In the same vein, the creation of conducive conditions for business to thrive, and participation of our people in the mainstream economy is non-negotiable. In this regard, a focused attention to industrialization and manufacturing will be the centerpiece of this administration so that we put Limpopo on higher trajectory of economic growth and development.

Honourable Speaker.

We are alive to the fact that we are called upon to execute an extremely taxing task. However, as revolutionaries we have accepted that ours is not an easy parade, hence it is called a struggle.

Our province is well endowed with human capital – the beautiful people of Limpopo in all their splendour and diversity. They stand out everywhere. Limpopo also has an abundance of physical beauty and natural wealth. Only if we could create an environment in which all three ingredients can be put together to drive economic growth and development. That is the responsibility that the people of Limpopo have entrusted to us, individually and collectively, irrespective of our political affiliations.

In terms of human capital, we have donated some of our best talents to Gauteng and major centres of our country. You find them at the SA Reserve Bank, National Treasury, Academia, mining, tourism, Agricultural sector and the country's major financial institutions. They do us proud, serving the entire nation. But we can do with some of those talents as we gird our loins to raise the game here at home. However, for that to happen, we must create economic opportunities and better living conditions in this province. I'm not against the migration to Gauteng and elsewhere in our country. It's a global phenomenon. People change places for a variety of reasons. But it shouldn't be because they cannot find economic opportunities at home. So, we owe our current and future generations something different – a socio-economic environment that makes it easy for them to choose to stay and develop their neighbourhoods. After all, when Limpopo does well, South Africa will benefit too. But unless we raise our individual and collective game, the sons and daughters of Limpopo will continue to journey to Gauteng and elsewhere, in search of better economic opportunities. We can do better. We must do better.

It is however worth appreciating that we are not starting from a weaker foundation as the 1994 administration had to do.

We are inheriting a much solid administration and a better province. In this regard, I beg your indulgence, to extend my heart-felt gratitude to my predecessors, Adv. Ngoako Ramatlhodi, Ambassador Sello Moloto, Cassel Mathale and my very own boss, Chupu Stanley Mathabatha, Mahlatjhe Hlabirwa for their varied contributions to our province.

Successive administrations under the stewardship of these leaders have over the past 30 years ensured that Limpopo is a better place to live in. Today, about 97% of households are electrified, no less than 70% of households have access to water, 96% of learners are on School Nutrition Programme, we have increased Grade 12 pass rate to over 79.5 % and, more importantly built state-of-the-art schools, hospitals and other essential infrastructure such as roads and bridges across the province.

We pride ourselves that all the people of this province have a sense of belonging to Limpopo. Completely gone are the Bantustans and other aberrations of Apartheid that sought to divide our people along racial and tribal lines. We have a fully-fledged single administration in this part of the country.

Nevertheless, the challenge for this new administration is not to drown in the glory of our past achievements - but to work even harder to make Limpopo a much better place to live in for all her people.

Honourable Speaker

It is against this background that, today, we recommit ourselves to jealously guard against any tendency that seeks to reverse the gains of the past thirty years of freedom and democracy.

At the core of these tendencies is crime and corruption. I implore on of all of you to join me in renewed efforts to fight corruption. We must do this because corruption is not only a government problem. It is a societal problem that require all of us to play our role, be it the ruling party, opposition, business, organised business and members of the public.

Madam Speaker

I want to conclude my acceptance message by recommitting the new administration to; the building of an inclusive economy that create jobs and prioritize rural development.

In keeping with our commitment of investing on our people, access to safe drinking water, access to primary health care to all and quality education, the provision of adequate human capital and the improvement of infrastructure in our schools and health facilities, will be high on the agenda of this administration.

Honourable members

We will, of course, outline in detail, the priorities ad plans of this government during the official opening of this provincial legislature to be convened, in all likelihood, before the end of this month.

However I must mention that We must all at all times feel great discomfort in living alongside fellow citizens who are struggling to make a living, simply because of

their circumstances at birth – that is their starting point in life. All of us in this chamber bear the responsibility of ensuring that there is no child who is left behind, without an opportunity to strive for a better life than that of his or her parents.

Lastly, honourable members;

Irrespective of your party-political affiliations, let us all leave here with a renewed sense of loyalty and commitment to serve the people of our province.

We have this far working together, and I have got no doubt, whatsoever, in my mind, that united in action we can do more to make our province the best place to live in.

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