

**SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE OPENING OF PREMIER HOTEL
THOHOYANDOU, THULAMELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, VHEMBE DISTRICT**

29 AUGUST 2024

Program Directors, Mr. Richard Brays and Mr. Kenny Mathivha,
Premier Hotels & Resorts COO, Mr. Sigal Nassimov-Geva,
Managing Director of African Century Group (Pty) Limited Premier Hotel Thohoyandou, Mrs. Tsakani Masia,
Acting MEC for LEDET, Ms. Mavhungu Lerule Ramakhanya,
Our esteemed traditional leaders,
Thovhela Rammuda, Thovhela Makuya, Thovhela Makumbane, Thovhela Nthumeni Masia,
Thulamela Local Municipality Mayor, Cllr. Sara Rammuda,
Makhado Local Municipality Mayor, Cllr. Dorcus Mmboyi,
Collins Chabane Local Municipality Mayor, Cllr. Shadrack Maluleke,
Chairperson of Limpopo Tourism Board, Mr. Andrew Dipela,
Acting CEO of Limpopo Tourism,
UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor & Principal, Prof. Bernard Nthambeleni,
International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Advocate Thembile Jolini,
TVET Vice-Chancellor & Principal, Ms. Basani Hlekani,
Distinguished guests.

Ndi Matsheloni, Avuxeni, Thobela, Good morning, Goie More.

It is with immense pride and joy that I stand before you today at the official opening of the Premier Hotel in Thohoyandou, under the Thulamela Local Municipality. This establishment is more than just a hotel; it is a beacon of growth, development, and progress—a true testament to our collective efforts in building a brighter future for our region.

To witness the opening of a large, black-owned establishment of this caliber within our local municipality is nothing short of remarkable. This milestone is a significant achievement in the 30 years of our democracy, marking the progress we have made in empowering black businesses. The emergence of such enterprises fills us with joy because it signifies job creation and improved livelihoods for our people, ultimately fueling the growth of our local economy.

The economic impact of this 4-star Premier Hotel is undeniable. It has already generated numerous job opportunities for our residents, encompassing various sectors of the hospitality industry, from housekeeping and front desk operations to culinary services. Job creation remains a cornerstone of our 7th administration's economic growth strategy, and we are immensely proud to see the Premier Hotel playing a pivotal role in meeting this critical need.

Program Directors, the ripple effect of this establishment on local businesses, can not be overstated. As more visitors flock to Thohoyandou to experience the Premier Hotel, we anticipate a surge in business for local restaurants, shops, and tourist destinations. This will benefit the entire community, contributing to a vibrant and thriving local economy. We commend the Premier Hotel management team for their foresight and commitment to investing in our community. Your dedication to providing a world-class experience for your guests is evident in every aspect of this hotel, and we are excited to have you as a partner on our journey toward sustainable growth.

As we open this hotel just a few days before September, a month dedicated to celebrating tourism, it is fitting that we highlight the role of such establishments in promoting our local heritage. The Premier Hotel is not just an asset for our community; it is a gateway that will attract tourists from our province, nationally and across the globe. With its state-of-the-art facilities, we are confident that it will become a prime destination for both business and leisure travelers. We encourage all visitors to take the time to explore our beautiful region, immerse themselves in our rich culture, and learn about our history.

All of us gathered here today must ensure that we become advocates of our tourist destinations in our local areas and province. During the launch of the tourism month at one of the black owned Lodge in the Modimolle-Mookgopong Local Municipality, Waterberg District, we made a plea to all government departments to promote the tourism destinations around the province as this will bring an economic growth in the province. Hotels like the Premier Hotel and others must be the center of tourist attraction in the accommodation industry.

Program Directors Tourism plays a vital role in driving economic growth by generating revenue, creating jobs, and fostering infrastructure development. As visitors spend money on accommodation, dining, transportation, and entertainment, local businesses thrive, leading to a ripple effect across various sectors. This inflow of capital not only boosts the profitability of

enterprises directly involved in tourism but also supports related industries such as agriculture, retail, and services.

The direct economic benefits of tourism are that it promotes cultural exchange and enhances the global visibility of a destination. By attracting international visitors, tourism helps to showcase the unique heritage, traditions, and natural beauty of a region, making it a more attractive place for further investment and development. Ultimately, tourism serves as a powerful engine for sustainable economic growth, driving progress, and prosperity for local communities.

Program Directors, this establishment has set a new benchmark for the hospitality industry in our area. We believe that the success of the Premier Hotel will act as a catalyst for further investment, encouraging other businesses to follow suit and contribute to the economic prosperity of our Municipality. With the support of academic institutions like UNIVEN and TVET College, who are represented by their principals, we can ensure that our youth are equipped with the skills needed to thrive in the hospitality industry.

Let us encourage our children to pursue careers in this sector, recognizing that it is as valuable as any other profession. By doing so, we will nurture a diverse and skilled workforce in our province, ready to seize the opportunities that lie ahead.

Program Directors, all of us have an obligation to promote local markets and businesses, as they are a powerful catalyst for economic growth and community development. By encouraging residents to buy from local vendors and entrepreneurs, we not only keep money circulating within the community but also create job opportunities and support the livelihoods of local families.

This fosters a robust, self-sustaining local economy that is less dependent on external factors and more resilient to economic downturns. Furthermore, local businesses often have a smaller environmental footprint, contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, and enhance the uniqueness of the region, making it more attractive to tourists and investors alike.

As we celebrate this remarkable achievement, we must also recognise the responsibilities that come with growth. It is crucial that we maintain a delicate balance between economic development and the preservation of our natural resources and cultural heritage. We are committed to working

closely with the Premier Hotel management team to ensure that they grow beyond our borders, attract global tourist, and grow our economy.

Program Directors, in conclusion, the Premier Hotel is a symbol of our community's resilience, determination, and shared vision. It stands as a testament to what we can achieve when we work together. We are proud of how far we have come and are excited for what the future holds. To the staff of the Premier Hotel, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your hard work and dedication. Without your commitment, this day would not have been possible. You are the backbone of this establishment, and we are proud to have you as part of our community.

Let us continue to be ambassadors for the Premier Hotel, spreading the word far and wide about this outstanding establishment and the opportunities it brings to our province.

I thank you.