

ADDRESS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA AT THE MAKGOSHI
RETREAT, PALALA

24 OCTOBER 2024

Chairperson of the Limpopo House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders,
Hosi PC Ngove

Deputy Chairperson Rammupudu B

Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons of Local Houses,

Honourable Members of the provincial house

Members of the Provincial Executive committee of the Provincial House,

Senior Traditional Leaders,

All MECs,

Limpopo Provincial Commissioner, General Thembi Radebe

Waterberg Executive Mayor Cllr, Jack Maeko

Lephalale Municipality Mayor, Cllr, Aaron Mokgetle

SALGA Limpopo, Ms Ledile Sebati

Honorable Traditional Leaders, esteemed guests, and respected attendees,

It is indeed a great honor to be part of this important 2-day Makgoshi Retreat—an event of great significance, not only for our traditional leaders but also for us as the government. This retreat serves as a platform to unite the custodians of our rich heritage, creating a vital space for open dialogue on the pressing issues that impact our traditional leadership and the communities they serve. We stand together today with the hope that meaningful discussions will be held, our collective resolve strengthened, and new pathways forged that honor our traditions while addressing the challenges of the present and future.

Chairperson, traditional leadership is the cornerstone of our cultural heritage, identity, and continuity in our society. As custodians of our customs and values, traditional leaders have preserved the wisdom passed down through generations. Their role goes beyond governance; they provide stability and a sense of belonging to communities, particularly in rural areas. They act as a bridge between the past and the present, ensuring that our cultural practices continue to thrive even as we adapt to modern challenges. Their influence maintains social cohesion, fostering unity and respect among diverse groups.

Furthermore, traditional leaders play a critical role in governance and development. They are deeply connected to the communities they lead, and their insights are invaluable in addressing local issues such as land allocation, conflict resolution, and the promotion of peace and justice. When traditional leadership is recognized and integrated into broader governance frameworks, it strengthens democracy by ensuring that the voices of all citizens, particularly those in marginalized areas, are heard. In this way, traditional leadership not only preserves cultural identity but also significantly contributes to socio-economic development and nation-building.

Chairperson, despite the significant role our traditional leaders play, many challenges continue to hinder their ability to fully serve their communities. Some of these challenges are deeply rooted in the structures governing traditional affairs. Disputes related to leadership succession, recognition, and internal conflicts within royal families are some of the most complex and time-consuming issues, often requiring legal intervention.

The Premier's Office regularly receives complaints about traditional matters, and while we strive to mediate, many of these issues fall under the jurisdiction of the MEC for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements, and Traditional Affairs (COGHSTA). Unfortunately, the delay in responses to complaints, disputes, and applications has been a challenge, leading to frustration among traditional leaders. Many turn to the Premier's Office as a

last resort, further burdening the office with cases that should be addressed at the department level.

To address this, we have established a portal system to monitor the progress of issues referred to COGHSTA. However, the lack of updates on this system remains a significant obstacle. From July to September 2024 alone, we have recorded 46 cases regarding traditional leadership disputes. As things stand, we have **835 cases registered** and **565 cases litigated**. You will understand that court battles take time to be finalized.

Chairperson, Royal families must understand that once a Notice of Motion or Summons has been issued against the Premier or the MEC, any further communications must be directed through the lawyers for State- Office of the State Attorney. Therefore, whenever a Royal Family or leader requests an appointment with the Premier, the Premier will first consult with the Legal Services for an update concerning that family or leader and to verify the meeting's agenda.

We must stress that the Premier cannot make decisions regarding who ascends to leadership—this is a family matter that must be agreed upon internally to prevent further disputes.

Chairperson, it is crucial that traditional leaders understand and follow the standard operating procedures for leadership recognition. These procedures begin with the traditional council receiving a request from the royal family, followed by a district-level meeting involving the royal family, traditional council, and an ethnologist. After this meeting, a report is submitted to COGHSTA, which verifies the authenticity of the submission and prepares the recognition certificate for approval. The Premier's Office only receives these cases after COGHSTA's decision has been made.

As we reflect on these challenges, it is imperative that we work together to find sustainable solutions. Traditional leaders must remain unified and maintain strong working relationships with local councilors, municipalities, and the government. Local councilors should work collaboratively with traditional leaders, especially on issues concerning land allocation, community development, and resource management and not undermine the traditional leaders. The success of our communities depends on this cooperation.

Moreover, as a government, we recognize the critical need for our traditional leaders to participate in discussions on economic development, particularly in matters concerning land for commercial use, water shortages, and road infrastructure which are still faced by our traditional leaders. The well-being of our communities' rests on addressing these issues, and traditional leaders have a key role to play in ensuring that development benefits the people they serve.

Chairperson, as I conclude, I therefore call on all traditional leaders to forge unity among yourselves and work closely with government officials, local councilors, and communities. Together, we can advance the economic growth and development of our province. The participation of senior traditional leaders in development discussions with business developers and municipalities is essential to unlocking the full potential of our land and communities.

Thabo Mbeki former President of the Republic of South Africa once said” I am certain that South Africa will not succeed in its efforts to rebuild, reconstruct and develop herself if she does not inspire all our people, black and white, to accept that they share an equal and shared responsibility and opportunities to work together to ensure a happy future for all.”

We, as the government, pledge our unwavering support for your efforts. The Premier's Office remains committed to ensuring that traditional leadership issues are addressed promptly and effectively. Let this retreat serve as a road map that guides us toward resolving the challenges that traditional leaders face and, most importantly, toward a future of unity, growth, and prosperity for all.

I thank you.