

Keynote Address by Premier Dr. Phophi Ramathuba  
Official Opening of the Mphaphuli Traditional Council Office

Friday, 29 November 2024

Program Director,  
Honorable MEC for COGHSTA, Mr. Basikopo Makamu,  
Honorable MEC for Public Works, Roads, and Infrastructure, Mr. Ernest Rachoene,  
Thovhele Gole M.M. Mphaphuli,  
Executive Mayor of Vhembe District, Cllr. Freda Nkondo,  
Thulamela Local Municipality Mayor, Cllr. Sara Rammbuda,  
Chairperson of the Limpopo Provincial House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders, Hosi Ngove,  
Representatives of CONTRALESA,  
Esteemed guests,  
Members of the Mphaphuli community,

Ndi Matsheloni, Avuxeni, Thobela, Good Morning, Goeie More

Today, we gather under the expansive skies of Limpopo, where the roots of tradition intertwined with the promise of progress. This occasion is more than an official opening; it is a celebration of unity, resilience, and the timeless wisdom of our ancestors, embodied in the institution of traditional leadership. As we stand on the soil of the Mphaphulis, let us be reminded of the Mphaphuli Kingdom, which traces its origins to the esteemed Singo clan.

During the reign of King Thohoyandou, the Venda high priest, or Tshifhe, was **Gole**, who later became the founder of the Mphaphuli house. According to oral history, Gole earned the nickname "Mphaphuli" because of his extraordinary prowess in combat. It is said that he would decisively defeat his enemies, cutting them into pieces. In admiration, people would proclaim, "Gole u phaphula maswina" (Gole tears enemies apart). Over time, this praise was transformed into a title, and he became widely known as Mphaphuli.

Programme Director, Traditional councils are the heartbeat of our communities, bridging the rich heritage of our past with the dynamic demands of the present. They are sanctuaries of culture and wisdom, custodians of our identity, and pillars of social cohesion. Today, as we open the doors to the Mphaphuli Traditional Council Office, we reaffirm our collective commitment to empowering these vital institutions and ensuring they thrive in the modern era.

Allow me to express my heartfelt gratitude to Thovhele Gole Mphaphuli and all traditional leaders across Limpopo, represented by the Provincial House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders, Local Houses, and CONTRALESA. Your leadership is a beacon of guidance, rooted in the values of unity, justice, and service. From the founding of the African National Congress in 1912 to your enduring role in the liberation struggle, you have stood as a testament to the strength and resilience of traditional leadership.

As President Cyril Ramaphosa eloquently reminds us, "It is through leadership that serves the people with integrity that we can build a nation rooted in dignity and justice." Our traditional leaders exemplify this principle, standing alongside government and communities to combat poverty, crime, gender-based violence, and other societal challenges. When our society faces trials, we find solace in the wisdom, guidance, and steadfast support of our traditional leaders.

Program Director, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa enshrines the role of traditional leadership, recognizing it as integral to governance, provided it aligns with democratic principles. The Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act (TKLA) of 2019 reinforces this mandate, ensuring traditional councils' function with inclusivity and accountability.

Here in Limpopo, significant strides have been made to strengthen these institutions:

**Out of 168 recognized senior traditional leaders, 157 traditional communities have been constituted, meeting the requirements of the TKLA.**

**40% of traditional council members are now elected by communities, reflecting our commitment to inclusivity.**

**We are resolute in finalizing the outstanding councils to ensure compliance with legal frameworks by February 2025.**

The province boasts:

Two Kingships and one Queenship, symbolizing the highest order of traditional leadership.

203 traditional communities representing over 2,111 villages under the stewardship of headmen and headwomen.

These figures highlight the indispensable role of traditional leadership in fostering unity and cultural preservation across Limpopo.

Our government has prioritized resourcing traditional leaders to enhance service delivery:

1. An annual allocation of R6 million supports Kingships and Queenships, while provisions for inaugurations and funerals of senior leaders are being reviewed.

2. To date, 142 vehicles have been delivered/handed over to our senior traditional leaders.

Since 2014, over 25 traditional council offices have been constructed or refurbished, with an additional 24 furnished this year alone.

3. Efforts to fill administrative vacancies and align operations with the TKLA are ongoing.

**Despite these achievements, challenges remain. Succession disputes, for instance, often threaten community stability. The Provincial Investigative Committee continues to resolve these issues, fostering unity and adherence to constitutional principles.**

Program Director, this new office stands as a testament to our shared vision of progress. Beyond its physical structure, it is complete with access roads, a guardhouse, palisade fencing, and open parking—it symbolizes a space for collaboration, dialogue, and service. It will serve the 76 villages under the stewardship of Thovhele Gole Mphaphuli, embodying the aspirations of the community.

South African poet Don Mattera once wrote, “Let the waters flow, not only to quench the thirst of the parched land but to revive the souls of those who have forgotten the taste of freedom.” Today, this office flows with the

promise of progress, quenching the thirst for development and revitalizing our collective spirit.

To our traditional leaders, we have recently launched the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign. As the government, we rely on your influential voices and leadership to amplify this critical message. Let us use your council meetings as platforms to raise awareness and encourage dialogue about gender-based violence and femicide. Together, we must discourage these heinous acts and commit ourselves to rooting them out of our communities. Your leadership in this regard is essential to fostering safe and thriving environments for all.

To the Mphaphuli community, this office is your sanctuary. May it serve as a place for reconciliation, decision-making, and building a future that honors your heritage while embracing innovation.

Let this day mark the beginning of a new chapter for the Mphaphuli Traditional Council, one defined by resilience, collaboration, and shared prosperity. Together, we will honor our past, celebrate our present, and build a future that is truly transformative.

Ndi a livhuwa.