

OPENING REMARKS BY LIMPOPO PREMIER DR. PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT LEKGOTLA, The Ranch Resort

21 February 2025

Honourable Members of the Executive Council,
Director-General,
Heads of Departments,
Executive Mayors and Mayors,
Municipal Managers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ndi Matsheloni, Thobela, Avixeni, Good morning, Goie more.

A very warm welcome to this critical gathering, the Provincial Government Lekgotla, where we converge as a collective force charged with the responsibility of shaping the destiny of our province.

Like a mighty river, Limpopo's progress flows from the confluence of our collective wisdom, commitment, and action. The fertile soil of our province has nourished civilizations for centuries, just as today, we must cultivate policies and initiatives that will yield a bountiful harvest for our people. This Lekgotla must be a forge where we temper bold ideas into implementable solutions, a platform where we move beyond rhetoric and commit to action that leaves no citizen behind.

We meet at a time when the 7th administration has a clear and non-negotiable mandate: to deliver on the priorities outlined in the Medium-Term Strategic Framework: inclusive growth and job creation, reducing poverty and the high cost of living, and building a capable, ethical, and developmental state.

These priorities are not stand-alone aspirations but deeply interconnected imperatives that demand a strategic and coordinated approach. We must acknowledge that economic growth without state capacity is unsustainable. Equally, poverty reduction can not be achieved without inclusive industrialization and job creation. This Lekgotla, therefore, must not only refine our strategic interventions but also ensure their seamless implementation.

The recent ruling party PEC Lekgotla has broadly provided a framework for this EXCO Lekgotla. As I have alluded earlier, our view is that the province will not be able to achieve these priorities without a strategic focus on economic development and industrialisation agenda.

As a province, we have identified Mining, Agriculture, and Tourism as the key pillars of our economic development. However, if we are to propel Limpopo into a higher trajectory of growth, our economic cluster must urgently outline key catalytic programs that will accelerate industrialization.

We need to expand our economic outlook beyond our traditional sectors and actively explore renewable energy, the digital economy, the creative industry, and the waste economy. These sunrise industries must not remain theoretical possibilities. We need concrete, high-impact projects that can be piloted in this term of administration.

We can not achieve sustainable economic transformation without strong logistics and network infrastructure. Water, roads, energy, and ICT remain the bedrock of economic growth. This administration will not tolerate infrastructure delays that cripple development. The endless protraction of projects like the Giyani Water Project and other stalled agriculture infrastructure developments is unacceptable. Our people no longer trust our speeches; they demand action. From this Lekgotla, we must make it clear that those responsible for poor project implementation, whether through inefficiency, corruption, or extortion, will be held accountable.

Governance is about trust, and for us to rebuild public confidence, we must consolidate the capabilities of both our provincial government and municipalities. The latest audit outcomes indicate that Limpopo is moving in the right direction, but we must not become complacent. The Office of the Premier, Provincial Treasury, and COGHSTA must intensify their focus on building an ethical, developmental state with clean governance practices. The 7th administration can not afford to regress.

This Lekgotla must also refine our District Development Model (DDM) approach. Collaboration between provincial departments, municipalities, and entities is paramount if we are to maximize service delivery impact. The sustainability of our provincial entities must be prioritized, ensuring that they contribute meaningfully to economic development rather than being a drain on resources.

We must acknowledge and commend the Department of Education for its impressive Grade 12 results, with an improvement from 79.05% to 85.01%. However, this must not be the ceiling but a stepping stone towards a 90% pass rate. Our investment in education must begin at the foundation phase, strengthening Early Childhood Development (ECD) and aligning our schooling system with economic demands. Schools specializing in agriculture, engineering, and technical trades must be prioritized to equip our youth with skills that respond to market needs.

Furthermore, our partnership with higher education institutions and industry stakeholders must be leveraged to implement a comprehensive provincial skills strategy. Last year, I convened a Provincial Skills Conference in partnership with the Department of Higher Education and Training, and I expect the final conference report by March 2025. In addition, I have directed the Director-General of Limpopo and the CEO of the National Skills Authority to draft a detailed implementation framework to advance economic development through skills development.

While we continue tackling economic and governance challenges, we must also confront a pandemic that has left deep scars in our communities—Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF). Our Crime and GBVF Summit provided us with a clear

roadmap, but implementation must be prioritized. We can not claim progress while our women and children live in fear. This is not just a government responsibility—it is a societal issue, and we must mobilize all sectors to eradicate GBV from our communities.

Financial prudence remains a key priority. The 7th administration must resolve all SCOPA findings and strengthen financial oversight. Our budget planning and expenditure management must eliminate under-expenditure while ensuring value for money. I direct the Office of the Premier and Provincial Treasury to develop a clear financial strategy that aligns resources with provincial priorities.

This Lekgotla must not be reduced to a talk shop. It must produce a clear, actionable blueprint that speaks to the needs and aspirations of the people of Limpopo. As leaders, we must emerge from this gathering with a renewed sense of urgency, commitment, and responsibility.

Each EXCO cluster must identify high-impact catalytic projects that will drive economic growth and job creation. Our recruitment and retention strategies must prioritize ethical, skilled, and innovative human capital. We can not afford inefficiency, indecision, or delays. The time for action is now.

As Amílcar Cabral wisely stated, "Claim no easy victory. Always bear in mind that people are not fighting for ideas. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace...to guarantee the future of their children."

Colleagues, let us embrace this Lekgotla with a spirit of decisiveness. We owe it to the people of Limpopo to turn plans into progress, speeches into solutions, and policies into prosperity. Let this be a Lekgotla of action, accountability, and impact!

I thank you.