

SPEECH BY LIMPOPO PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE ENGAGEMENT
WITH PUBLIC SERVANTS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES, NIRVANA HALL, POLOKWANE

28 March 2025

Programme Director,
DDG Mr Walter Segoa,
Capricorn District Executive Mayor, Cllr Mamedupi Tefo,
Polokwane Municipality Executive Mayor, Cllr John Mpe,
Heads of Departments,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thobela, Avuxeni, Ndi matsheloni, Good morning, Goie more,

It is a profound honor to stand before you today, not just as your premier but as a fellow advocate for inclusivity, dignity, and equality. Our gathering today is not just an engagement; it is a reaffirmation of a fundamental truth that: "People living with disabilities are not defined by their limitations but by their limitless potential."

You are leaders, innovators, professionals, and contributors to our society in ways that can not be overlooked.

Programme Director, history, and our experiences have taught us that disability does not mean inability. We have seen trailblazers across various sectors, scientists, entrepreneurs, educators, and public servants who have defied societal expectations and excelled beyond measure.

It is for this reason that our government remains steadfast in ensuring that no person is discriminated against because of their disability. Every individual must be afforded the opportunity to work, thrive, and contribute wherever they choose, without barriers or prejudice.

This stakeholder engagement is a crucial platform for amplifying the voices of public servants living with disabilities. It is an opportunity for us to listen, learn, and take decisive action to address the challenges that persist.

Ladies and gentlemen, the objectives of today's engagement are clear:

To create a space where you, as public servants with disabilities can voice your concerns and shape policies that directly impact you.

To ensure that disability mainstreaming remains central to government planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

To reinforce our commitment to reasonable accommodation within the public service, so that all employees, regardless of their physical, visual, hearing, or intellectual disabilities are provided with the necessary support to perform at their full potential.

Programme Director, our government policies are in place to ensure the protection and empowerment of persons with disabilities. These policies go beyond legal frameworks; they are a call to action to make workplaces more inclusive, ensure accessibility in public spaces, and eliminate barriers that hinder the full participation of persons with disabilities in our society.

Since the dawn of democracy, we have made significant strides in improving access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Our social security interventions continue to cushion the most vulnerable from poverty and exclusion. However, we acknowledge that more must be done.

Programme Director, employment equity remains a critical area of concern. Too many qualified individuals with disabilities struggle to secure employment, not because of a lack of skills but due to deeply entrenched biases and infrastructural challenges.

Accessibility in the workplace must go beyond compliance; it must be a lived reality where persons with disabilities feel valued and empowered.

Assistive technologies and adaptive workplace environments must be prioritised to ensure that everyone, regardless of their abilities, can contribute meaningfully.

As a government, we are intensifying our efforts to break barriers and open doors to an inclusive society. The participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making structures must not be symbolic but substantive.

Programme Director, we do not seek inclusion for the sake of representation, but we seek inclusion because diversity strengthens governance, enriches our perspectives, and builds a society that truly reflects the values of equality and human dignity.

Let me be clear: Persons with disabilities are not asking for charity. They are demanding their rightful place at the table. As a government, we are committed to ensuring that this becomes a reality.

I call upon every department, every municipality, and every decision-maker present here today to translate policies into action.

Let us create workplaces that reflect our shared commitment to inclusivity.

Programme Director, as a government, we must ensure that recruitment, training, and promotion opportunities are genuinely accessible to persons with disabilities.

We must all embrace the principle that ability is not measured by physical or sensory attributes but by competence, commitment, and character.

Ladies and gentlemen, let today's meeting be a milestone in our journey toward true inclusivity. This should be an opportunity for government and public servants living with disabilities to co-create solutions that will shape the future of our workplaces and communities.

Let this engagement be a catalyst for tangible change. Let us continue working together to build a Limpopo where every citizen, regardless of ability, is valued, included, and empowered.

I thank you.