

REMARKS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION ON THE DESIGNATION OF THE
FETAKGOMO-TUBATSE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE

STEELPOORT, SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT

10 April 2025

Programme Director, Maoto Molefane

Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Mr Zuko Godlimpi,
MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Mr Tshitereke
Matibe,

Executive Mayor of Sekhukhune District Municipality, Councillor Minah
Bahula,

Mayor of Fetakgomo-Tubatse Local Municipality, Councillor Eddie Maila,
Esteemed Traditional Leaders,

Senior Government Officials,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the Media,

And most importantly, the proud and resilient people of Sekhukhune,

Let me extend my warm greetings on behalf of the Limpopo Provincial
Government. It is both a privilege and an honor to be standing here today
in the land of warriors, in a place where the soil carries the memories of
battles fought and victories won.

Sekhukhune is no ordinary place. It is a land where resilience is not just a
trait but a way of life. A land that gave birth to leaders of vision and

courage, from King Sekhukhune I to the fearless traditional and political figures who refused to bow to injustice and dispossession.

This land holds in its belly not only the pain of struggle but also the promise of prosperity. Its mountains particularly within the Eastern Limb of the Bushveld Complex are known for its rich deposits of platinum group metals including platinum, and palladium and rhodium, along with chrome, vanadium and other minerals; its valleys echo with the pulse of a people determined to reclaim their place in the economic mainstream of our country.

Programme Director, today's interactive public participation session on the planned designation of the Fetakgomo-Tubatse Special Economic Zone is a continuation of that journey, a journey that connects our proud heritage with our shared future.

The session we are hosting today together with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition led by Deputy Minister Mr Zuko Godlimpi, Sekhukhune District Municipality, and Fetakgomo-Tubatse Local Municipality, will provide us with the opportunity to collectively shape a development that will define generations to come.

This gathering follows the recent Government Gazette publication by Minister Parks Tau, in which he announced his intention to designate the Fetakgomo-Tubatse area as a Special Economic Zone. In doing so, he opened the floor for public comments, ensuring that the voices of the people, the heartbeat of democracy are not only heard but respected and included in shaping this significant development.

This session is not just a platform to speak; it is a platform to dream, to influence, and to decide. It is your opportunity, as residents of Fetakgomo-Tubatse Local Municipality, to engage with leaders from national, provincial, and local spheres, and to raise your ideas, expectations, and hopes for this Special Economic Zone.

Programme Director, this SEZ is not a vague ambition but a thoroughly researched and strategically positioned development. The feasibility studies and business plans submitted by the Limpopo Provincial Government, backed by both Fetakgomo-Tubatse Local Municipality and Sekhukhune District Municipality, have been evaluated, tested, and validated.

What we are proposing is real, practical, and most importantly, it is needed for the welfare of our people.

Let me assure you that this proposed SEZ will be a game-changer, a multi-sectoral economic zone that will stimulate activity in critical areas including mining inputs manufacturing, renewable energy, mineral processing, logistics, agro-processing, general manufacturing and aftermarket production.

These clusters are designed not in isolation but in response to both global trends and local realities. We are creating an SEZ that is not only future-ready but rooted in the strengths of Sekhukhune.

Located between the two industrial giants, the Samancor Smelter and the Lion Ferrochrome Smelter, this zone is strategically placed within a vibrant mining and industrial hub. This offers us the competitive advantage of established infrastructure, access to natural resources, and proximity to key

markets. The SEZ will also incorporate renewable energy technologies, embracing clean energy to power our industries and protect our environment.

Programme Director, this SEZ is not just about infrastructure and industry. It is about building a future. It is about transforming a historically marginalised district into a driver of Limpopo's economy and a proud contributor to South Africa's reindustrialisation agenda. And we have not waited for designation to begin making progress. Limpopo has already laid a strong foundation for the implementation of the SEZ.

We have mobilised resources, aligned stakeholders, and secured commitments. What remains now is to mobilise our people to ensure that the community is part and parcel of this journey, from concept to completion.

To our traditional leaders, I say this: you are the custodians of this land. The success of this SEZ rests on your shoulders. Let us protect this project like we protect our homes. Let us guard it against opportunists and criminals who seek to derail it.

If we want to truly address poverty, unemployment, and crime, we must defend this SEZ with unity and resolve. We must send a strong message to those who operate under the guise of "construction mafias" that their actions are not welcome here. We will not allow extortionists and disruptors to hold our development hostage. This is our future and we will not compromise it.

To our people, I say: this is your moment. The Fetakgomo-Tubatse SEZ is not a government project. It is your project. It is your opportunity to start

businesses, to gain skills, to find employment, and to uplift your families. Let us prepare our youth to take advantage of the opportunities that will emerge.

Let us encourage local entrepreneurs to get ready to become suppliers, service providers, and investors. Let us ensure that this SEZ is inclusive, transformative, and sustainable.

The road to economic freedom does not begin in distant capitals, but it begins here in Steelpoort. It begins with the choices we make today. So let us choose growth. Let us choose unity. Let us choose development. Let us make Sekhukhune not just a district known for its mineral wealth but a district known for its economic vision, its industrial success, and its empowered communities.

Together, let us rise beyond poverty. Together, let us silence the guns of unemployment. Together, let us build an economy that works for all our people.

Let this be the legacy we leave behind, a land that refused to be defined by struggle and chose instead to be defined by strength, innovation, and shared prosperity.

I thank you.