

ADDRESS BY LIMPOPO PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA ON THE OPENING OF THE ANNUAL ONGWEDIVA TRADE FAIR IN NAMIBIA, 24 AUGUST 2025

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Namibia, Dr Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah  
The Ministers and Deputy Ministers of State present,  
Governor Hofni Lipinge of Oshana Region and  
The Honourable Governors of the Four Northern Regions: Oshana, Omusati, Oshana, Oshana and Oshikoto  
My fellow Members of the Executive Councils for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism) Hon Tshireke Matibe) and Agriculture and Rural Development in Limpopo (Hon Nakedi Sibanda-Kekana)  
The Traditional Authorities mayors and councillors  
The leadership of the Churches  
Ladies and gentlemen.

Mwanangalapo,

It is both an honour and a pleasure to stand before you today, representing the vibrant and culturally rich province of Limpopo in South Africa, amidst the welcoming spirit of this beautiful nation, Namibia. Equally I also bring warm and revolutionary greetings from His Excellency President Ramaphosa on behalf of the people of South Africa We express our heartfelt greetings from Limpopo, known for its breath-taking landscapes and diverse heritage.

Madam President, we are uplifted by the warmth and kindness shown to us by your people during our brief visit. The hospitality we've received from local councils and regional administrations further reinforces our shared identity. Together, as northern neighbours, we embody a spirit of camaraderie, one that binds us not only through our geography but our shared vision for economic prosperity and freedom.

With a delegation of 30, including ten businesspeople from key sectors - such as agro-processing, textiles, hospitality, and tourism - we are here to strengthen our economic ties and explore new opportunities for growth. This collaboration is pivotal as we continue to cherish the twinning agreement established in 2018 with your four Northern Regions. Our regular exchanges, such as the Marula Festival and the Ongwediva Trade Fair, mark the heartbeat of our ongoing partnership.

The relations between South Africa and Namibia are not just diplomatic; they are deeply rooted in our shared history of struggle against colonialism and apartheid. We have established a firm foundation of bilateral cooperation, driven by mutual respect and understanding.

Our shared goals within regional frameworks such as SADC and the African Continental Free Trade Area embody our efforts to harness the strengths of our markets and peoples.

It is not a coincidence that our visit comes at a time wherein as South Africans, we are commemorating woman's month honouring and celebrating the 1956 generation of women who took it upon themselves to challenge Strydom and his apartheid regime. This affirms our belief that women are natural born leaders, therefore having you Her Excellency as President is not a favour from anyone, you were there, you have seen it, you fought and you have liberated us. The elder had this vision when she named you Ndemupelila; to my fellow South Africans it simple means "the one who paves the way". For indeed you have paved the way too many young women out there, the Deputy Mayor who just addresses us sees herself in you and she is now confident that it's possible.

Therefore, it feels good to say Her Excellency instead of His excellency which we have been doing for the past 35years hence I say we are here to continue with the Women's Month celebrations. I can tell you the spirits of Kakulukadhe Mungungunda, of Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Mama Lilian Ngoyi, Mama Charlotte Manny Maxenge are resting in peace seeing you in the forefront of building new Namibia, the new SADC and, of course, the new Africa led by women who will make sure we build economies that are as resilient as we are.

Today, in a world increasingly challenged by hegemonic politics and trade wars, we have an opportunity to cultivate a robust internal market, enhancing trade within our borders. The statistics speak volumes: while intra-regional trade within SADC stands at only 15%, we must take inspiration from global examples like the EU and ASEAN, where trade exceeds 50%. Let us rise to this challenge, leveraging our diverse resources and cooperation to foster economic empowerment.

Your excellency together with your Four Northern Regions: Oshana, Omusati, Oshana, Oshana and Oshikoto we have taken up the challenge

Our annual gathering is more than just an exhibition of goods and services; it is a platform for deepening people-to-people relations, exchanging knowledge, and sharing innovative practices. We must reflect on our rich natural resources - minerals, marula fruit and our intertwined histories - and explore avenues for value addition, ensuring that we boost local economies through beneficiation and sustainable practices.

Let us work together to improve agricultural practices, share expertise in crop cultivation and livestock management and refine our transport connections - linking the Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo Airport with Polokwane International Airport to facilitate mobility and commerce.

It is imperative that beyond these annual events, we foster ongoing relationships between our business communities. By strengthening cooperation between our business chambers, we lay the groundwork for thriving economic partnerships that can yield mutual benefits for our citizens.

Thank you for this incredible opportunity to be part of the Ongwediva Trade Fair. Your hospitality is an icing on the cake to our cherished friendship and I look forward to the fruitful exchanges and lasting impacts that will arise from our collaboration.

Let us continue to build bridges of prosperity, innovation and unity.

Thank you.