

WELCOME ADDRESS BY PREMIER OF LIMPOPO DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA AT THE
NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY COMMEMORATION, NKOWANKOWA STADIUM, 09 AUGUST
2025

Programme Director
The President of South Africa, His Excellency Mr Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa
Members of the Cabinet
Members of Parliament
Speaker of the Provincial Legislature
Members of the Limpopo Executive Council
Deputy Ministers
Esteemed Traditional Leaders
Leaders of various religious fraternities
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

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

A warm and hearty welcome to each of you gathered here today at the vibrant Nkowankowa Stadium as we commemorate the National Women's Day under the uplifting theme: "Building Resilient Economies for All."

Mr President, it is always a privilege to have you with us and we shall never tire of saying, "Welcome back home!" We understand that your presence is not just a gift to Limpopo but a shared treasure for the entire nation and indeed, the global community.

The last time we received you in this stadium, our hearts were heavy as we mourned the loss of a revered warrior, the late Tito Mboweni. Your comforting words on that solemn occasion helped us find solace in our grief, a true testament to your compassionate leadership.

Today, however, we gather with sprouting enthusiasm and overflowing hope, just like a fertile land after a nurturing rain - the spirit of the 69 years of the Women's March invigorating our purpose!

As we celebrate, we are reminded that your commitment to women's empowerment is reflected in the 50% representation of women in your cabinet. This is more than just a statistic; it is a seed of promise that blossoms in the hearts of all women across our province.

Our hope is further bolstered by a remarkable experience we had just this week. We had the honour of sitting among brilliant young women enrolled at the first-ever medicine school established in South Africa at the University of Limpopo. We witnessed the dawn of a new era as these aspiring doctors graduated, marking a monumental milestone in our province's history after 70 years. It was a sight that filled me with awe, reminding us that the future is indeed bright and it gleams with the determination of our young women.

In the spirit of resilience, we are thrilled to share our stories of young women who are cultivating not just crops but dreams! Take, for instance, Catherine Makamu, a spirited 26-year-old from Folovhodwe, who has successfully farmed okra, tomatoes and other vegetables while pursuing her PhD. Here in Mopani, we celebrate Kagisho Modiba, who has embraced entrepreneurship in agriculture with boundless ambition. My heart swells with pride when I think of Wendy Moshakga in Moletjie, who, under the support of our provincial government, has expanded her farm and is now dedicated to teaching others about cultivation. Such stories remind us that resilience flourishes when nurtured by community and government support.

We honour the path laid by the pioneering women of our province, like Samsokolo, Angelina Hlope, and many others who were part of the courageous march in 1956. These women fought tirelessly, planting the seeds of hope and courage for future generations!

However, alongside this spirit of resilience, we cannot ignore the shadow that casts over our land—the sobering tales of abuse, rape, and violence against women that persist in Mopani, Vhembe and surrounding areas.

The abhorrent reports of violence, including the recent horrific crime against a 17-month-old child, send ripples of despair through our hearts. This is why commemorating this day here in Nkowankowa is so crucial Mr President. It provides us with a platform to confront these issues head-on and reshape our society. We must work together to change the narrative - that young girls must never fear for their futures but rather, be empowered to thrive.

As we look to the horizon of what's possible, I am heartened by the spirit of the 300-strong Vakhegula Vakhegula - representing the tapestry of our community and donning the South African flag with pride! They remind us that age is just a number and that resilience knows no bounds. Their participation in soccer tournaments inspires us to stay young in spirit, reminding us that hope is ageless.

So, with open hearts, let us unite as we journey together towards a future of resilience, empowerment and prosperity for all.

Welcome to Limpopo, where the roots of our history run deep and together, we will cultivate a landscape rich in opportunity and promise.

Thank you!