

OPENING REMARKS BY LIMPOPO PREMIER, DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA, DURING THE DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LIMPOPO HOUSE OF TRADITIONAL AND KHOI-SAN LEADERS, BOLIVIA LODGE, POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY, CAPRICORN DISTRICT

11 MARCH 2026

Chairperson of the Limpopo Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, Hosi Pheni Ngove,

Deputy Chairperson of the Limpopo Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-SAN Leaders, Kgoshi Boleu Rammupudu,

Members of the House,

Esteemed Kings, Queens, Senior Traditional Leaders, Headmen and Headwomen,

Members of the Executive Committee,

Limpopo SALGA Chairperson, Cllr John Makoro Mpe,

Director General of Limpopo Provincial Government, Mr Nape Nchabeleng,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

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

Like the roots of an ancient baobab tree that hold firmly beneath the soil while its branches stretch toward the heavens, the institution of traditional leadership stands as the enduring foundation of our identity, our culture and our governance.

Long before the establishment of modern systems of administration, traditional leadership provided guidance, unity and stability to our communities. It preserved our values, resolved disputes, protected land and ensured that the voice of the people remained heard.

It is therefore a privilege for me to stand before this august House today, not only to engage, but to report back on the progress government has made in strengthening and supporting this important institution.

Honourable Members,

In our Province, the institution of traditional leadership remains strong and vibrant. We remain proud that our province is home to two Kingships and one Queenship, which continue to provide leadership and direction to communities across the province. In total, we have 203 recognised traditional communities, led by 168 recognised Senior Traditional Leaders.

While progress has been made, we acknowledge that there are still 31 vacancies currently being processed and government remains committed to ensuring that recognition processes are concluded with the urgency they deserve so that no community is left without leadership.

Across the province, we have 2,111 recognised villages, of which 1,851 Headmen and Headwomen have been formally recognised. These leaders remain the first point of governance in many of our rural communities. Through the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs, government continues to provide administrative support, tools of trade and assistance with dispute resolution in order to ensure that these institutions function effectively.

Honourable Chairperson,

Government has also made significant progress in providing financial support to strengthen the operations of traditional leadership institutions. Through the annual salary subsidy grant, government continues to support legacy staff within traditional councils.

In addition, the Executive Council adopted EXCO Decision 21 of 2025(b) which provides financial support to traditional leadership institutions. This support ensures that these institutions are able to fulfil their leadership responsibilities and continue serving their communities with dignity.

Honourable Members,

The work of Traditional Councils remains central to governance within traditional communities. To ensure their functionality, the Provincial Treasury has approved funding amounting to R20.3 million for Traditional Council operations and an additional R13.29 million for sitting allowances for council members.

These allocations are intended to strengthen governance, improve accountability and ensure that councils are able to perform their responsibilities effectively.

However, we must also acknowledge that the Constitutional Court ruling on Section 25 of the Limpopo Traditional Leadership Act has had unintended consequences, particularly in relation to the finances of Traditional Councils. The limitation on tribal levies has placed financial pressure on some councils that previously relied on these levies for operational activities. Government

is actively engaging on mechanisms to mitigate this challenge so that councils can continue to serve their communities without disruption.

Honourable Chairperson,

On the matter of tribal levies and trust accounts, government has undertaken verification processes to ensure transparency and accountability. I am pleased to report that the verification process was completed with no material audit findings.

Work is now underway to ensure that interest payments due to qualifying beneficiaries are processed, while engagements with the National Treasury continue to finalise the liquidation of remaining investments. Government has also begun settling outstanding balances owed to beneficiaries, ensuring fairness and compliance with financial regulations.

Honourable Members,

We are aware that effective governance requires adequate administrative support. At present, the Department provides three key support positions within Traditional Councils, namely an Administrative Officer, a Finance Clerk and a Cleaner. However, due to budgetary constraints, there are currently 207 staff vacancies across councils.

To address this challenge, government has adopted a prioritisation approach that focuses on councils that currently have no staff at all, ensuring that they receive support first. At the same time, discussions at national level are underway to standardise the organisational structure of Traditional Councils

across the country, which will help bring clarity and consistency to staffing arrangements.

Government has also prioritised the provision of tools of trade to traditional leaders to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. To date, 162 vehicles have been delivered to Senior Traditional Leaders across the province. In addition, cell phones have been provided to recognised leaders, with distribution continuing as new recognitions are concluded.

Office furniture has also been rolled out progressively. During the 2023/24 financial year, 24 Traditional Councils received furniture, followed by 18 councils during the 2024/25 financial year. Procurement for the 2025/26 financial year is currently underway, while 15 additional councils are scheduled to receive furniture in the 2026/27 financial year.

Infrastructure development remains another important area of support. Since 2014, government has constructed more than 25 Traditional Council offices and refurbished 18 existing facilities. Several current projects have already reached 100 percent completion, while a few experienced delays due to contractor challenges and weather conditions. Corrective measures have been implemented to ensure that these projects are completed without further delays. Additional infrastructure projects have also been approved for implementation during the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years.

Honourable Chairperson,

In strengthening governance within the institution, government has made progress in the constitution of Traditional Councils. To date, 141 Traditional Councils have been gazetted, following the publication of Government Gazette No. 50161 of 22 February 2024. However, some councils could not

be gazetted due to outstanding leadership recognition matters and mapping disputes, which government continues to address.

Capacity building has also been prioritised. During the March 2025 induction programme, 149 Traditional Councils participated, achieving an 88 percent attendance rate. The programme covered important topics such as governance, leadership roles, disaster management and the code of conduct. Furthermore, during the 2025/26 financial year, 16 Traditional Councils received specialised financial management training to strengthen compliance and accountability.

Honourable Members,

Government is also addressing disputes and leadership investigations across various districts. Several cases have already been finalised, while others are currently at different stages of investigation through the Section 59 of the Traditional and Khoisan Leadership Act No 3 of 2019 which confers powers to the Premier to designate an investigative committee. We appreciate the cooperation shown by traditional leaders and communities in ensuring that these matters are resolved fairly and in accordance with customary law.

As we prepare for the 2026 Winter Initiation Season, the Provincial Initiation Coordinating Committee was appointed on 6 February 2026. Applications for initiation schools closed on 28 February 2026, and adjudication will take place between 17 and 20 March 2026, with the gazette expected before the end of March.

Honourable Members of the House,

Today's engagement is an opportunity for open dialogue, reflection and partnership. Government values this House and recognises the central role traditional leaders play in governance, development and social cohesion. While challenges remain, the progress we have made demonstrates government's commitment to strengthening the institution of traditional leadership.

Let us continue to work together to ensure that our communities experience development, stability and prosperity, guided by the wisdom of traditional leadership and supported by the resources of government.

I thank you.