

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA AT THE GALA DINNER WITH MOPANI DISTRICT HOUSE OF TRADITIONAL AND KHOI-SAN LEADERSHIP, VAHLAVE GUEST HOUSE, GREATER-GIYANI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, MOPANI DISTRICT

10 April 2026

Programme Director,

Speaker of Limpopo Legislature, Dr Makoma Makurupetje,

Deputy Speaker of Limpopo Legislature, Ms Tebogo Mamorobela,

Members of the Executive Council,

SALGA Chairperson, Cllr John Mpe,

Executive Mayor of Mopani District, Cllr Pule Shayi,

Mayor of Greater Giyani Local Municipality, Cllr Thandi Zitha,

Mayor of Fetakgomu-Tubatse Municipality, Cllr Eddie Maile,

Your Majesties and Queens,

Chairpersons of the Provincial House and Khoi-San Leadership, Hosi Ngove,

Deputy Chairperson of the Provincial House and Khoi-San Leadership, Kgoshi Rammupudu,

The Local House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership,

Royal Highnesses,

Honourable Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Riperhile, Ndi Madekwana, Thobela, Good evening, Goeie naand,

Programme Director, beneath the quiet dignity of our shared heritage, we gather as custodians of a sacred legacy. Like ancient rivers that have nourished our land for generations, the institution of traditional and Khoi-San leadership continues to flow

through the veins of our communities, preserving identity, anchoring values and guiding our people with wisdom that no passage of time can erase.

Your presence here, this evening, is a powerful reminder that before there were formal systems of governance, there were thrones of wisdom, councils of elders and leaders who governed with integrity, humility and an unbreakable bond with the people. For this, we honour you.

This evening is symbolic, as it reflects unity, mutual respect and a shared commitment to the people we serve. It is also an opportunity to reaffirm a simple but profound truth: that government deeply values and respects the institution of traditional and Khoi-San leadership as indispensable partners in governance and development.

Programme Director,

Government has, over time, engaged in several meetings, dialogues and structured engagements with the Houses of Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership. These platforms have not been mere formalities, they have been deliberate efforts to listen, to learn and to respond to the issues affecting your institutions.

Through these engagements, we have gained a deeper appreciation of the challenges you face and we are committed to ensuring that conditions within traditional councils are improved, strengthened and sustained.

We want to state without ambiguity: that your role in our society is foundational. You are the custodians of culture, the guardians of tradition and the moral compass of our communities. Without you, the fabric of our society would be incomplete.

As government, we are fully aware that the effectiveness of traditional councils depends on proper support, coordination and stability. That is why we have committed ourselves to several interventions aimed at ensuring the smooth functioning of these institutions. These include improving administrative support, addressing disputes within traditional

leadership, strengthening governance systems and enhancing collaboration with municipalities and other spheres of government.

In this regard, the Department continues to provide institutional support through the placement of key personnel within traditional councils. These include Senior Administration Officers, Accountants or Finance Clerks, as well as Cleaners. These officials play an essential role in ensuring that the day-to-day operations of traditional councils are functional, accountable and responsive to the needs of our people.

However, we must also be candid about the challenges we face. At present, there are 207 vacancies across traditional councils in the province. In Mopani District alone, we have 35 vacancies, comprising 10 Senior Administration Officers, 10 Finance Clerks and 15 Cleaners. This reality places strain on the effective functioning of these institutions and ultimately, on service delivery.

We are equally mindful of the broader fiscal environment within which we operate. Budgetary pressures require us to make difficult, but responsible decisions. To this end, the Department has developed a staffing prioritisation proposal, which seeks to ensure that the most critical positions are filled first, in line with available resources. This proposal is now ready for presentation to the Head of Department for consideration and approval, after which it will be submitted to Provincial Treasury for funding support.

At the same time, we have listened carefully to the concerns raised by senior traditional leaders regarding the current staffing structure. There is a clear and consistent call for the expansion of personnel in traditional council offices to better meet the growing demands placed upon them. We acknowledge and appreciate these concerns.

Importantly, this matter is also receiving attention at a national level. A process is underway to develop uniform, generic structures for traditional councils across all provinces. This initiative aims to standardise operations, improve efficiency and ensure that all traditional councils are adequately capacitated to perform their functions.

I am pleased to note that the Limpopo Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders has already been consulted on the proposed structure and that your valuable inputs have been submitted to the National Department of Traditional Affairs for consideration.

Programme Director,

Allow me to also highlight the progress made regarding the provision of tools of trade for our traditional leaders. The Department embarked on a process during the 2023/24 financial year to procure vehicles for all qualifying senior traditional leaders. This intervention is aimed at improving mobility, enhancing accessibility to communities and enabling traditional leaders to effectively execute their responsibilities, though we have not yet reached our target but the process is ongoing.

We are also working towards policy and legislative improvements that will bring clarity, stability and unity within the institution of traditional and Khoi-San leadership. These reforms are not imposed, they are shaped through consultation with you, because we believe in building together.

Your Majesties,

The challenges facing our communities, poverty, unemployment, inequality and social instability, require a united front. Government alone cannot overcome these challenges. We need you at the centre of development.

In times of crisis, such as natural disasters, your role becomes even more critical. Your indigenous knowledge systems, your proximity to communities and your leadership structures position you as key partners in disaster management and response. Your inclusion in local disaster management forums is therefore not optional, it is essential.

Your Majesties and Royal Highnesses,

We recognise the challenges you face, ranging from limited resources and administrative constraints to leadership disputes and governance complexities. It is for this reason that we have taken decisive steps, including the appointment of dedicated advisors within the Office of the Premier to focus on traditional leadership and economic development matters.

These interventions are already yielding results, with improved mediation processes, reduced litigation and faster resolution of disputes. This is a clear demonstration of our commitment to restoring stability and dignity within your institutions.

Let me also emphasise the importance of land stewardship. Land is not merely a resource, but it is a heritage that connects generations. We encourage our traditional leaders to safeguard communal land for the benefit of present and future generations and to explore sustainable development models such as long-term lease agreements that unlock economic value without compromising ownership.

Mopani District, rich in agricultural potential, cultural heritage, and natural resources, holds immense opportunity. Together, we can unlock this potential to create jobs, promote food security and grow our local economy.

As we approach the upcoming Local Government Elections, we also call upon your leadership to promote peace, stability and active participation within your communities. Your influence is critical in ensuring that democratic processes unfold in an environment of unity and respect.

In closing, let us remember that unity is our greatest strength. When government and traditional leadership stand together, we become a powerful force for transformation.

Let us move forward as one, united in purpose, committed to service and dedicated to restoring the dignity of our people.

Ndza khensa.