

WELCOME REMARKS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE SMS SUMMIT
AT THE RANCH RESORT, POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY, CAPRICORN DISTRICT

20 May 2026

Programme Director,
Members of the Executive Council,
Director-General, Mr Nape Nchabeleng,
Heads of Departments,
Chairpersons of Boards,
Chief Executive Officers,
Chief Financial Officers,
Senior Management Service Members,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ndi Matsheloni, Thobela, Avuxeni, Dumelang, Good Morning, Goeie Mône.

It is both an honour and a privilege to welcome you all to this important two-day Senior Management Services Summit here at The Ranch Resort in Polokwane.

We gather at a defining moment in the journey of our province. A moment of collectively crafting practical solutions that will change the lives of our people.

There is an African proverb which says: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” That wisdom captures the spirit and purpose of this summit. The transformation of Limpopo into a capable, ethical and developmental state cannot be achieved in silos. It requires a united administration, decisive leadership and a shared commitment to excellence in public service.

This summit is convened within the framework of the Public Service Regulations of 2016, which recognise the Senior Management Service as a strategic network for the dissemination of policy, expertise and leadership across government.

Programme Director,

The Limpopo Provincial Government has reviewed and aligned the Limpopo Development Plan with the priorities of the 7th Administration and the Medium-Term Development Plan for 2024–2029. Through the State of the Province Address and the Budget Speech, we have clearly outlined the strategic direction of this administration.

Our priorities are clear: inclusive economic growth and job creation, infrastructure development, poverty reduction, industrialisation, ethical governance, and building a capable developmental state.

Today, we can confidently state that the strategic foundation of government has been consolidated. All provincial departments now have permanently appointed Heads of

Departments and Chief Financial Officers. The Executive Council has approved departmental strategic plans aligned to the Limpopo Development Plan, ensuring that all institutions are moving in one direction with a shared vision and measurable targets.

This summit therefore serves as an important platform to reaffirm the priorities of the 7th Administration and to ensure that the strategic echelon of government moves from planning into implementation.

As senior managers, you are not expected to merely understand policy documents. You are expected to implement them with urgency, discipline and measurable impact.

Programme Director,

A capable and developmental state is built on ethical leadership, accountability and professionalism. During the Budget Speech, we committed ourselves to intensifying the fight against corruption and strengthening governance across all departments and entities.

Government has already commenced with the vetting of senior officials and lifestyle audits, particularly for those serving in strategic supply chain management positions. Integrity roadshows are also being rolled out in partnership with law enforcement agencies, oversight bodies and civil society.

Public service must never become a private opportunity for self-enrichment.

We are encouraged by the latest provincial audit outcomes, where five out of ten departments achieved clean audits, while the remaining five departments obtained unqualified audit opinions. This demonstrates that progress is being made.

However, we must not become complacent. We have now entered the 2025/2026 audit cycle, and I want to make it categorically clear that regression will not be tolerated. I expect qualitative improvement across all departments and public entities. Provincial entities, in particular, must improve their audit outcomes and strengthen financial management and governance systems.

Clean governance is non-negotiable.

Programme Director,

One of the greatest contradictions in government is that while unemployment remains extremely high, funded vacancies continue to remain unfilled.

As the 7th Administration, we cannot allow such a situation to continue.

The Executive Council has therefore approved a comprehensive recruitment plan for departments and public entities. Funded posts must be advertised and filled within the prescribed timeframes. Failure to implement these directives will have serious

implications for Accounting Officers, Chief Financial Officers and Chief Executive Officers.

At the same time, all recruitment processes must strictly comply with the Public Service Act and all applicable prescripts. We must build a professional public service based on merit, ethics and competence.

Employment equity must also remain central in our recruitment processes, particularly the empowerment of women, young people and persons living with disabilities.

Programme Director,

Economic transformation and industrialisation remain at the centre of our developmental agenda. Through the Special Economic Zones in Musina-Makhado and Fetakgomo-Tubatse, we are laying a foundation for industrial growth, investment attraction and sustainable job creation.

We welcome Cabinet's continued support on the designation of the Fetakgomo-Tubatse SEZ towards unlocking economic opportunities in this strategic corridor, including the approval of the license, a move that set to accelerate industrial expansion, job creation and beneficiation.

Infrastructure development also remains one of our top priorities. Roads, bridges and water infrastructure are critical to economic growth, social development and service delivery. The recent floods exposed serious weaknesses in infrastructure resilience and disaster preparedness. Our communities expect decisive interventions from government, not excuses.

We therefore need departments that are capable of planning properly, spending efficiently and implementing projects on time and within budget.

Programme Director,

This summit must not become another talk shop. It must produce practical solutions and measurable outcomes.

The commissions established here are focused on the critical areas that require urgent attention, including disaster management, infrastructure delivery, professionalisation of the public service and digital transformation.

The people of Limpopo are not interested in conference resolutions that gather dust on shelves. They want to see roads fixed, water flowing, jobs created, schools functioning and municipalities working.

That responsibility rests with all of us gathered in this room.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the next two days, I urge all delegates to engage openly, honestly and constructively. Let us emerge from this summit with renewed energy, stronger partnerships and a clear programme of action.

History will judge us not by the meetings we attended, but by whether we changed the lives of our people for the better.

Together, let us consolidate the Limpopo Administration towards a capable, ethical and developmental state.

Welcome to the summit.

I thank you.