

TRIBUTE BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA, AT THE FUNERAL OF
KGOŠI STEPHEN MAKGAPE MOLEPO (MAREMO)

BOSHEGA, GA-MOLEPO

24 October 2026

Programme Director,
The MEC for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs
(CoGHSTA),
The Speaker of the Provincial Legislature,
The Executive Mayors of Capricorn District and Polokwane Municipalities,
Leadership of the House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders,
Our Esteemed Traditional Leaders,
The Director-General and Government Officials present,
The Molepo Royal Family and the entire Molepo Nation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thobela!

As we stand in this solemn place, the Lebopo mountains (the beginning of the Drakensburg mountain range) - which have stood as our timeless shelter for decades - seem to cast their sorrowful shadow toward Ga-Molepo. Today, the tears of this community flow alongside the waters of the Mphogodiba, Hlabashane, Mokgotla and Mmamatebele rivers, mourning a giant who has fallen.

It is with heavy hearts and a profound sense of loss that we are once again gathered here in Boshega under sorrowful circumstances, to bid farewell to a revered leader, a custodian of our heritage and a pillar of our society.

Ditlou, re swabile. Mahloko Bakgalaka ba Dingotlo!

When Kgoši Maisha III passed on in 2016, we were hopeful that his successor, Kgoši Stephen Makgape Molepo - our beloved Maremo - would carry the baton of traditional leadership for many decades to come.

But alas, we are not the ones to determine when life should begin or where it should end. It is for that reason that accepting this sudden departure is so profoundly difficult for all of us.

We wished the Molepo people a long and enduring journey with their Kgoši, yet the frailties of human life remind us that our true measure is not found in the length of our years, but in the depth of our impact.

Born on 11 January 1963 to the late Kgoši Alfred Setlakalane Molepo IV and Mmakgoši Matlou Philia Molepo, Kgoši Makgape Molepo's life was destined for service. From his

early education at Boshega and Manoshi, to completing his matric at Tshebela, he was a man driven by a quest for practical knowledge.

His pursuit of technical skills took him to Siyabuswa Denelton Technical College, where he trained in welding and boiler-making. He understood the dignity of honest labour, working as a professional photographer and taking an active leadership role in the transport business under the Mankweng Taxi Association.

When he was officially installed in 2016 as the traditional leader of the Molepo Nation, he embraced his heritage with humility, wisdom and absolute integrity. He recognised that the sacred duty of traditional leadership extends far beyond cultural preservation; it requires an unyielding commitment to unity, stability and socio-economic progress.

Today Ga-Molepo stands out as a beacon of development despite some of the nagging challenges that it has. In the last two decades we witnessed how the big road (D4040) from Ga-Chuene straddled the Molepo areas going to join the R71. This stretch of 45 kilometres has 08 clinics with major ones within Ga-Molepo area.

We now access major parts of Ga-Molepo on tarred surfaces, something that was foreign, if a lot of you recall what this place looked like before 1994. Dark, inaccessible and no water, something that the two previous senior traditional leaders together with government have been able to change.

Kgoši Maremo was a modern leader - a visionary entrepreneur, businessman and dedicated livestock farmer who firmly believed in economic self-reliance and productivity.

He understood that our traditional communities must not merely observe development; they must actively drive it. It was under his visionary leadership that critical initiatives, such as the Ga-Molepo Mall Development Project, were advanced to bring economic growth, investment and employment closer to our people across his 36 villages.

His dedication did not go unnoticed. Only weeks ago, on 31 August 2026, he was rightfully honoured with the Civility Award, the Beacon of Light Award, and special recognition from iChange Nations USA honours that stand as a permanent testimony to his public service and leadership.

The deep and enduring connectedness between the Molepo people and its traditional leadership speaks volumes about the quality of development in this region. It is leadership of this calibre that has nurtured and produced leaders who serve our broader society today, including the Executive Mayor of Polokwane Municipality, Cllr Makoro John Mpe.

Ga-Molepo has truly become a pioneering community because Kgoši Maremo understood that the call of death is ultimately a message to the living. It forces us to reflect: what impact are we making on one another while we draw breath?

If we are to truly honour Kgoši Molepo, let us do so by building an egalitarian society that values life, protects and respects women, youth, and children and rejects the scourge of violence and inequality. Equally, let us honour him by going out in our numbers to vote on 04 November 2026.

To his grieving wife, Mrs Mmakgantla Elizabeth Molepo; his sons, Maisha Surprise and Malatswa Jilian; his daughter, Mogaladi; his sisters, Ms Putla, Ms Mananya, and Ms Manamedi; the entire Molepo Royal Family and the royal councils: we share your sorrow. We pray that you find comfort in the rich legacy he leaves behind.

Mokgapa o Mogolo o Wele, Dithaga tša lla Boshogoshogo. Maremo o wile.
A great tree has fallen and the people mourn.

Kgoši Stephen Makgape Molepo will be remembered as a respected traditional leader, entrepreneur, farmer, mentor and devoted servant of his people. His legacy lives on through his family the institutions he shaped, and the generations who will draw inspiration from his dedicated life.

Robala ka khutšo, Kgoši Maremo.
Robala ka kgotso, Tlou setumula megaba. Mokgalaka!