MEDIA STATEMENT

24 November 2026

LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT WELCOMES SPECIAL TRIBUNAL JUDGEMENT ON COVID-19 CELLPHONE PROCUREMENT MATTER

The Limpopo Provincial Government has welcomed the judgement handed down by the Special Tribunal on 23 November 2026, dismissing the application by the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) seeking to set aside the cellphone procurement contract between the Limpopo Department of Health and Mobile Telephone Networks (MTN) during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The judgement brings clarity to a matter that arose during one of the most challenging periods in our country's history, when government departments were required to respond urgently to an unprecedented public health emergency while ensuring that essential services reached communities.

In 2020, the then Premier Mr Chupu Stanley Mathabatha, in the administrations commitment to transparency, accountability and the protection of public resources, referred various matters relating to the procurement of COVID-19 goods and services in the province to the SIU for investigation.

These referrals were intended to ensure that any allegations of irregularities were independently investigated and that appropriate action would follow where wrongdoing was established.

The cellphone procurement matter concerned an arrangement in which MTN donated 5 000 cellphone handsets and supplied a further 5 000 at a reduced price to the Limpopo Department of Health. The devices were intended to support digital household screening as part of the provincial response to COVID-19.

In dismissing the SIU's application, the Special Tribunal found that the evidence presented did not establish the alleged unlawful conduct or collusion between the parties. The judgement further highlighted significant shortcomings in the SIU's investigation, including its failure to engage key officials who were directly involved in the procurement process.

Importantly, the Tribunal acknowledged the extraordinary circumstances under which the procurement took place, noting that emergency procurement procedures were available to government during the pandemic. It also considered evidence that the devices were subsequently utilised for vaccination registration, contact tracing and other COVID-19-related activities.

Premier Dr Phophi Ramathuba said: "The Provincial Government respects the independence of the judiciary and welcomes the outcome of the judicial process. The judgement reinforces the importance of evidence-based investigations, procedural

fairness and the principle that allegations must be substantiated before adverse findings can be made against individuals or institutions."

The Limpopo Provincial Government reiterates that it will continue to cooperate with law enforcement and oversight institutions in addressing allegations of corruption, maladministration and the abuse of public resources.

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Issued by the Limpopo Provincial Government