



MPUMALANGA
PROVINCIAL
GOVERNMENT

SPEECH
2020/21 OPENING OF THE
PROVINCIAL HOUSE OF
TRADITIONAL LEADERS-
PREMIER RM MTSHWENI-TSIPANE

Growing Mpumalanga together



Mpumalanga Provincial
House of Traditional Leaders



MPUMALANGA
THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN

**SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, HON. R.M MTSHWENI-TSIPANE ON
THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE 6TH MPUMALANGA
HOUSE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS IN THE PROVINCIAL
LEGISLATURE**

DATE: 23 JULY 2020

**Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders,
Inkhosi S.G Ngomane,**

**Your Majesties, Ingwenyama Makhosoke II and Ingwenyama
Mabhoko III,**

**Chairperson of the National House of Traditional Leaders,
Ikosi SE Mahlangu,**

**Deputy Chairperson of the Provincial House, Ikosi C.M
Mahlangu,**

**MEC for COGTA, Honourable M.J Msibi and Members of the
Provincial Legislature,**

Executive Members of the Provincial House,

Chairpersons of the Local Houses.

Our revered Traditional Leaders, Amakhosi / Magoshi,

Abondlunkhulu and Izinduna,

Director-General, Ms SP Xulu,

Deputy Director General, Mr T.P Nyoni,

Senior Management of the Department of COGTA, led by the

Acting Head, Mr S Ngubane,

Compatriots and fellow citizens,

Lotjhani

1. Chairperson, may we observe a moment of silence, in remembrance of Inkhosi Mnisi and all the victims of COVID-19. (***Umoya wabo mawulale ngokuthula***).
2. Chairperson, contrary to the celebratory mood that characterizes the opening of the House of Traditional Leaders, this year, we mark the occasion under tragic circumstances.
3. It is with sadness that today we converge without ***Inkhosi Mnisi*** of the ***Mantjolo Traditional Council***, who was laid to rest earlier this year. He was an embodiment of fearless leadership underpinned by unwavering integrity, even if it cost him support and friendship.
4. He spoke his mind on substantial matters, and as a result, he was able to win support where it mattered the most. His death is a loss to his community ***eNkonjaneni***, and the local primary school that he contributed for its establishment, will be a stark memory in his name and good legacy.

5. We will miss him for his astute leadership and strong sense of humour. To **uNdlunkhulu, Inkosikazi Thobeka**, our thoughts are with you and the Royal family, **bo-Manyovu, bo-Gwadlagwadla, umfula longawelwa ngumuntfu, uwelwa tinkonjane**.

6. Chairperson, we join the country in mourning the loss for one of our struggle heroes **Zinzi Mandela**. A descendant of the **abaThembu** royal family, who followed in the glorious footsteps of her father, the late uTata Madiba. Zinzi too contributed so much to our struggle, in her own right, to the demise of the oppressive system of apartheid.

7. As she was laid to rest last week, her famous statement flashed in my mind when she retorted in her feisty character that, and I quote: ***“The first instrument you were ever given is your voice. It’s important that when someone tries to silence you, you become as vocal and as loud as possible. Use your voice loudly and continuously”***.

8. We will remember her for her contribution to the struggle of a democratic South Africa, where every citizen enjoys constitutionally protected human rights.

9. Chairperson, we also learnt, with great sadness, of the passing of the remaining Rivonia trialist, *isthalandwe, uBaba Andrew Mlangeni* yesterday. uBaba Mlangeni was an embodiment of selfless commitment to the emancipation of the marginalised and disenfranchised.

10. uBaba Mlangeni was the moral compass that the nation needed to navigate out of the oppressive system of apartheid towards the constitutionally protected democratic dispensation we enjoy today.

11. We all must learn from the example of uBaba Mlangeni and place the needs and interests of the people we serve ahead of our interests. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

12. Chairperson, this function is held in sombre circumstances. The rising number of infections and fatalities and the fear of COVID-19 is a challenge that is facing not only the nation but the entire world. COVID-19 is also the reason why we gather to open the Mpumalanga House of Traditional Leaders virtually.

13. These infections and fatalities are a constant reminder that until we accept the new norm of **washing hands regularly, sanitizing, wearing a mask, covering your mouth with an elbow or a tissue whenever you cough** and **observing social distancing**, we will remain subdued before claiming victory against the virus.

14. In Mpumalanga, more than 52 people have succumbed to the virus, and dozens are in quarantine facilities made available by the provincial government for people who tested positive for COVID-19. Some are in self-isolation.

15. The virus is leaving a trail of devastation, causing families to endure untold pain of losing their loved ones. Like all provinces, we are not spared from the grief, as we mourn the departed souls, as we pray for the affected families and the infected patients fighting for their lives.

Role of traditional leadership in COVID-19 fight measures

16. Chairperson, it is now public knowledge that group gatherings is one of the avenues through which the virus is spread as proven by the World Health Organization (WHO).

17. This evidence was key in the lockdown regulations announced by the President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, which called for, amongst others, the suspension of public gatherings.
18. This had wide implications over the annual cultural ceremonies and the **ingoma** practice. We commend the traditional leadership for taking the decisive steps of suspending these gatherings, as guided by the National House of Traditional Leaders, led by the Chairperson, **Ikosi Sipho Mahlangu** and the Provincial Chairperson, **Inkhosi Sandile Ngomane**.
19. We are inspired by the gesture of all Amakhosi in all areas where ingoma and cultural ceremonies were scheduled, of embracing the decision. This decisive step spared the lives of young boys and communities against a potential catastrophe.
20. We are convinced that history will judge you mercifully for taking the right decision when you had an opportunity to do so. **Re a leboga**.
21. The Ward based COVID-19 fighting strategy that we have adopted in Mpumalanga, gives effect to the President's call, and the participation of traditional leadership is vital to produce the desired results.

22. The strategy is underpinned by three pillars, outlined hereunder:

- The primary pillar focuses on the establishment of COVID-19 Forums that involve church formations, community leaders and other strategic stakeholders at Ward level. The emphasis is on communicating COVID-19 messages to the community in each Ward. This include behavioural change where in the *wearing of masks is mandatory and a penalty for non-compliance*. It discourages *stigmatization* against those who tested positive and recovered.
- The secondary pillar focuses on *screening and testing* of community members in a Ward and the *isolation* of patients for treatment. The forum must encourage patients to isolate from their families and communities, to prevent infecting them.
- The third pillar focuses on fatalities and placed a duty upon municipalities to identify *land for burial sites* to provide decent burial for our departed souls. The cemeteries will not be designated for COVID-19 victims only, but for all kinds of circumstances.

23. As Africans, we subscribe to the values of **Ubuntu**, and this means a decent burial for our loved ones, for them to rest peacefully. The provincial government is providing support for COVID-19 burials through the procurement of body bags for the departed souls.

24. Chairperson, as we fight the virus, we are gravely concerned about the misinformation relating to the use of some herbs that are not clinically proven. The use of such herbs, and the concoction of lemon and bicarbonate soda, circulating in the social media, will consequently lead to body complications and undesirable outcomes.

25. As custodians of indigenous knowledge, we appeal to you **bo-Ndabezitha** to caution the communities not to fall into the trap of misinformation and to urge our people to desist from the use of toxic herbs. Our position as government is that only clinically proven herbs can be consumed for medicinal purpose.

Commitments for support initiatives

26. Chairperson, it was on this occasion last year that we made commitments that sought to improve the administrative capacity of the Traditional Councils. In recognizing the role played by traditional leadership on socio-economic issues that confront traditional communities, we committed to increase the administrative grant of Traditional Councils from R150 000 to R300 000.

27. As we report back on this occasion, we are indicating that the R300 000 grant is paid to the Traditional Councils in tranches. The first payment of R150 000 has already been transferred.

28. I have been reliably informed by the Department that they are already processing the second tranche of R150 000 to all Traditional Councils, where some have already received it, and all Traditional Councils shall have received their portions by the end of July 2020.

29. We believe that this financial injection will further contribute towards the maintenance and retention of support staff, financing of operational overheads and all other costs necessary for the proper functionality of the Traditional Councils.

30. We had further committed to purchase new vehicles for all Amakhosi as tools of trade. It therefore gives me pleasure to inform **abo-Ndabezitha** that the vehicles have been delivered, as promised.

31. We are aware of the challenges faced by Amakhosi when attending functions on protocol matters. This crucial matter has been brought to our attention and therefore cannot be left unattended. Protocol guidelines were developed by both the National and Provincial COGTA Departments for all Traditional Councils.

32. The Department will capacitate Traditional Councils to ensure that these protocol guidelines are implemented, starting from the current financial year and shall be accelerated even towards the next financial year.

33. I am aware that there are Offices of Traditional Councils that are due for renovation and that there are those that are in a dilapidated state. This is based on an assessment which was undertaken by COGTA.

34. Such structures tarnish the image of the institution. All efforts shall be directed towards ensuring that this matter is addressed incrementally until all traditional offices have been attended to in full for the rest outer MTEF period.

35. We are also aware of the challenges that have been brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic that have necessitated that we change our ways of doing things, how we communicate, how we hold meetings and how we will protect the aged and the vulnerable. In Mpumalanga we have 11 Traditional Leaders who fall into the category of the aged and vulnerable as they are in the age bracket of 60 to 89 years.
36. For this reason we have urged the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs to find other alternative means such as electronic gadgets and devices to be provided to all Senior Traditional Leaders to enable their connectivity remotely without exposing them to COVID-19 related risks.
37. Chairperson, the reports on the Nhlapo Commission and the Tolo Committee have been in the public domain for some years now. These reports dealt with amongst others, the disputes in the matters of traditional leaders, succession and the recognition of Amakhosi within the province.

38. It must be indicated that whilst some of the recommendations in these reports may not result in favourable outcomes for some Traditional Leaders in the province, the Provincial Government is now legally bound to implement the recommendations as they still remain valid and enforceable.
39. Questions have been asked through court litigation and otherwise as to why the Provincial Government has not shown any appetite to implement the recommendations as were raised by these structures that were constituted legally to probe on these matters.
40. It must be indicated that this 6th Administration, in the absence of any other position that spells these matters otherwise, is bound to implement the recommendations as they appear in these evidential reports.
41. It is not by our choice but indeed the obligation to uphold the rule of law. The Provincial Government is therefore committed to ensure that justice prevails and that the institution of traditional leadership is accorded the integrity and honour by eliminating all disputes and claims that stand in tarnishing the legitimate authority of the institution of traditional leaders.

42. We will therefore work closely with the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders, all its Local Houses and Senior Traditional Leaders at large to strive for stability and integrity for this institution in the Mpumalanga province.
43. We cannot stop anyone from pursuing a legal challenge, however, this must be done with careful consideration, due to the integrity that is at stake.

Emakhosikati structure

44. Chairperson, former President, Nelson Mandela, whom we are commemorating this month, was an example of caring for the less privileged and protection of the vulnerable. As we reflect on the life and the times of this iconic figure, we remember his attributes which he pursued until his last breath.
45. Sadly, the brutal cases of Gender-Based Violence in our Province and elsewhere in the country, have laid bare the indictment to Tata Madiba's attributes. Not only are the men whose hands are dripping with blood for the murder of women and children, dishonoring Madiba, but their actions are tantamount to spitting to his face had he been alive today.

46. As Madiba put it, and I quote: **“Now is the time, and the time is now”**, indeed this is the time to stop the scourge of Gender-Based Violence in our society.
47. As we mark the third year since the establishment of the **Emakhosikati structure**, we applaud the role of **bo-Make besive** in leading the fight against the scourge of gender based violence, which is an indignation of Madiba’s attributes.
48. We are encouraged that you are living up to your role as the backbone of traditional leadership. We acknowledge the impact of the structure within rural communities, supporting vulnerable groups by sensitizing them about their rights, coordinating the provision of school girls with sanitary towels. Through this support, you have ensured that none of the girls in tribal communities miss classes at some point.
49. Your coordination for the distribution of food parcels to the vulnerable groups, has not gone unnoticed. **Siyabonga bo-Make besive, ningayekeli nangomuso ukuletha usizo esizweni njenge-Mbokodo lesilako kuvele ukudla.**

Development initiatives in rural areas

39. Chairperson, history will be made in Mpumalanga when the ***Nkosi City***, a multi-million rand rural development project gets underway soon at Pienaar, within the jurisdiction of **uNdabezitha SA Nkosi of Empakeni**.

40. The project will provide one thousand seven hundred and forty seven (1747) Fully Subsidized Dwelling Houses, Social Housing with an estimation of 166 Dwelling Units, five hundred and fifty eight (558) dwelling bonded houses, 9 Pre-schools, 3 Primary Schools, 2 Secondary Schools, a TVET College, Training Centres and a Provincial Hospital.

41. This will be the first of its kind within one of our Traditional leadership in our province. I wish to congratulate ***bukhosi baseMpakeni*** and the Community Property Association (CPA) for the successful application and commend you for your patience. The success of the Nkosi City hinges on a strong working partnership between the Mpakeni Traditional Council, the CPA and the community.

42. Furthermore, it will serve as a model for similar future projects, not only in Mpumalanga but country-wide. Similarly, any failure may send a bad signal about similar projects in rural areas and may discourage investors.

43. The rural Nkomazi Municipality, a shared jurisdiction of 6 Traditional Councils, is also gearing up for a **Smart City**, that will revolutionize the rural villages, through Integrated Human Settlement, including the construction of houses, development and connection of ICT Infrastructure, and Agri-Processing Uses.

44. MEC Msibi has committed his Department of COGTA to finalize the **land tenure upgrading programme** to improve the security of tenure for households in the area under the jurisdiction of **Ikosi BR Mahlangu of Somphalali Traditional Council**, in Kwaggafontein. Through this programme at least 3000 households will benefit.

Agrarian Revolution

45. Traditional communities remain trapped in poverty and inequality, and this is a matter of concern. Government remains committed to make interventions that will turn the tide to improve the socio-economic conditions.

46. The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs collected data for available land that can be used for agricultural purposes. This information has been shared with various service delivery Departments, and so far the Department of Agriculture has responded positively to allocate funding to give effect to the Agrarian Revolution.

47. Through this initiative, traditional communities will be able to utilize land as a major step to mitigate and alleviate poverty in these areas. Furthermore, this intervention will also address the challenges related to food security and unemployment.

48. The Department of COGTA and DARDLEA will lead the way in the partnership to ensure that Traditional Councils that have pledged land for this agrarian programme do benefit extensively from such support.

Service delivery initiatives

49. Chairperson, it is our long held view that all citizens of this country must be treated equally at all times. Any view contrary to this is not in line with this ANC-led government.

50. Our commitment to deliver the basic services in rural areas seeks to achieve this objective. The delivery of water is amongst them. The District Development Model, announced by the President will serve as a catalyst for the delivery of water through the coordination of resources from all the sectors to achieve this objective.

51. The construction of water projects that we tabled during the SOPA, will breathe life into this commitment. These projects are:

- The bulk pipeline from Loskop Dam to Thembisile Hani,
- The Mkhombo dam project in Dr JS Moroka, and

- The completed Lusushwane regional bulk water scheme in Gert Sibande District.

52. Through the District Delivery Model approach, we should be able to overcome the stubborn challenges that delay the achievement of this objective, such as the limited financial resources, the ageing infrastructure and illegal connections.

53. The inadequate rainfall and the new sprawling settlements exacerbate these challenges.

54. Chairperson, cases of land invasion continue to rear their ugly heads in our province. This unbecoming behaviour occurs mostly in areas under the administration of traditional leaders. ***Bo-Ndabezitha*** we urge you to work closely with Local Municipalities on matters of land use management, so that we can collectively overcome this challenge.

55. To resolve the land invasion challenges, the provincial government has directed municipalities to implement, without fail, Section 81 of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act.

56. The Department of COGTA will take the lead on ensuring the participation of traditional leaders in the development of the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs).

57. It must be further noted that there is no planning and development that will take place in your area of operation without your involvement and your consent, as regulated by Section 29 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act.

58. Another mechanism is for traditional councils to second people who reside within their jurisdiction to participate in Ward Committees where ward-based development matters are discussed.

59. The Provincial and Local Houses should continue strengthening their oversight roles to ensure the equitable distribution of services especially traditional communities. Provincial Departments are encouraged to work cooperatively with the houses of traditional leaders, when they are called to address special sittings of the houses.

Conclusion

60. In conclusion, Chairperson, I wish you, members of the Executive and ***bonkhe bo-Ndabezitha***, a successful season, notwithstanding the prevailing conditions we find ourselves in. We look forward to your guidance and direction on matters of development in traditional communities.

Hha Khensa.