

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

DATE: 5 MAY 2021

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 B.P Shiba and Members of the
Provincial Legislature,
Executive Members of the Provincial House,
Chairpersons of the Local Houses.
Our revered Traditional Leaders, Amakhosi / Magoshi,
Abo-Ndlunkhulu and Izinduna,
Acting 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,
Dumelang!

Salutations and COVID-19

1. Chairperson, this day invokes memories of one of the Ndebele warriors, King Nyabela, a gallant fighter who waged wars in defence of his nation. His victorious wars against colonialism and subjugation many decades ago, deserve a narration in the history books of this country. How King Nyabela, who ascended to the throne in 1879, used the caves in what is now known as Mapoch Caves in Rossenekal to protect his people and his land, while at the same time, using the very same caves to strategize for an onslaught against colonialists, remains a mystery.

2. His determination and resilience against colonialism and his ability to garner support from neighbouring tribes such as Swazis and Sothos, to intensify the fight around 1893, has fundamental lessons. It is now common knowledge that King Nyabela eventually capitulated and was subjected to a prison term until he died in 1902 after his release.

3. As we mark the opening of this House today, I can confidently confide with you and all Amakhosi that indeed the same spirit of resilience and determination against colonialists has rubbed on the communities of this province. With a similar spirit of resilience, we are convinced that even in the midst of this COVID-19 tragedy, there will be survivors, amongst them, yini bo-Ndabezitha.

4. His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa had his finger on the pulse when he described this resilience during the State of the Nation Address. He said, and I quote: ***“More than anything else, this crisis has revealed the true character of our remarkable nation. It has revealed a spirit of the people who refused to be defeated”***, close quote.

5. By adhering to the COVID-19 protocols of ***masking, washing hands*** and ***social distancing*** communities have contributed significantly to the reduction of the infections and fatalities. As at the end of April 2021, **more than 76 900 cases of COVID19 were reported with more than 1 300 fatalities in Mpumalanga. Of these, more than 74 000 recoveries were reported.**

7. These figures could have been worse, had it not been your positive response to embrace government’s call to suspend cultural activities. We will continue to assess the possibility of embracing our cultural activities of Immemo with periodical assessment of our conditions.

8. Whilst regulations are still in force for gatherings, both indoors and outdoors, these measures shall apply to all of us. I have observed and equally inundated by requests

from aMakhosi/Makgoshi who are earnestly waiting for our support and pronouncement for the restoration of Immemo.

9. In response to a fresh evaluation of this aspect, the MEC responsible for COGTA in consultation with Minister of COGTA shall soon advise the Executive Council (EXCO) on the adequacy of the current measures with appropriate inherent restrictions to allow for Immemo to continue. Just like how churches are administered under these circumstances, a proposal from the Province for national consideration and scrutiny will be submitted under the auspices of disaster management.

10. Exco shall on the basis of the advice and proper measures in place, then make the necessary considerations. This however does not cater for Ingoma/ initiation schools that remain closed due to high levels of health risks associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Ingoma shall also remain closed until appropriately advised.

11. This must be taken in the true spirit of saving lives and putting the importance of ensuring safety, protection and well-being of others as a priority over many other things. I am therefore calling on all Amakhosi/Makgoshi to continue embracing this for the true objectives and purposes of preserving lives, as they have been doing thus far.

12. Sadly, two (2) of our esteemed **Makgoshi, Hosi Theophilus Magwagwaza Mnisi** of the **Mnisi Traditional Council** and **Hosi Eric Mpisana Nxumalo** of the **Amashangana Traditional Council** in Bushbuckridge were amongst the mortalities of this deadly pandemic.

13. We are still struggling to come to terms with their demise, a big blow not only to their royal families and their subjects but the entire traditional leadership and us as government. Their patriotic spirit of preserving the Xitsonga cultural values and advancement of the development cause of their communities, will remain edged in our minds.

Let us observe a moment of silence in their honour.

May their souls rest in peace.

Thank you.

Tools of Trade

14. Chairperson the task of serving communities require resources for a tangible impact. This is the daunting task that Amakhosi are carrying daily without complaints, especially in this period characterized by the pandemic.

15. The commitment by the ANC-led Administration of ensuring that Traditional Leaders have the necessary tools of trade to perform their duties, remains unchanged.

16. Just in the past difficult year, characterized by the necessity to flatten the curve of the Covid-19 pandemic through Levels 5 to 1 Lockdown measures, it became necessary that we provide gadgets (data loaded ipad tablets) that would enable seamless connectivity and communication and to support continued interactions remotely at a distance and to minimize physical contact.

17. These gadgets were delivered to ensure that the principle of social distancing is highly supported and I am very proud that all traditional leaders today have such facility and can engage at a distance with less complications. I have been advised that this session is hosted as a hybrid of both a few of those with us here and many others who are at home, equally participating in this session.

18. These are noble measures that are set to secure continuing functionality whilst observing safety measures and protecting all of us from the vulnerability of the pandemic.

19. We have also ensured that all existing and functioning Traditional Councils are enabled through the allocated vehicles to function as part of these tools of trade. We are also proud to

put on record that from a total of 60 Traditional Councils in the Province, 57 Traditional Councils were allocated with vehicles as tools of trade for executing the tasks of the Councils.

20. The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs shall continue, through our support in the Executive to assess the condition of the vehicles in terms of proper maintenance and handling, for the members of the Executive Committee of the Provincial House, including their replacement where necessary, on account of reasons such as excessive mileage. The Department will also monitor prudent and diligent handling of asset management by all other Traditional Leaders allocated with vehicles in the Province.

21. It is important to ensure that these assets are treated with care at all times, considering that the public purse was used to acquire them and should accordingly be handled with the required dignity.

Agrarian Revolution

22. Chairperson, conventional wisdom dictates that we have to start somewhere if we are to get ahead. In the words of **Chauncey Depew**, an eminent writer, ***‘the first step towards getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are’***.

23. Poverty remains entrenched in rural areas, and farming is the source of poverty reduction and job creation. Although more work still needs to be done to improve the socio-economic conditions of communities in rural areas, however, the rising figures of households with access to water, electricity, coupled with the construction and paving of roads in rural areas, since the democratic dispensation, is evidence enough that the first step has been undertaken towards getting somewhere.

24. With less economic activities in rural areas, exposing communities to the harsh economic reality, the corona virus has exacerbated the dire situation. About eight (8) percent of the households are languishing in poverty in Mpumalanga, according to the 2016 Stats SA report. We have already taken the first step of turning the tide against these poverty conditions.

25. The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs convened a two days Agrarian Revolution Indaba in December last year to encourage the active participation of Amakhosi in the Programmes and projects aimed at stimulating vibrant economies in rural areas. Representatives from Government Departments, public entities, Municipalities, the private sector and the University of Mpumalanga participated in the indaba, to provide the much needed guidance for Bo-

Ndabezitha to take advantage of the benefits created by the programme.

26. The successful implementation of the Agrarian Revolution shall by all means, contribute immensely to the poverty alleviation initiatives. Ground breaking resolutions were adopted during the indaba, to give effect to these initiatives. Part of the resolutions include, but not limited to:

- Identify prime land for agricultural development.
- Transfer land under the jurisdiction of Traditional Councils for them to eliminate long processes under the DALRD.
- Create an environment for investment.
- Re-establish relationship between Traditional Councils and Municipalities.
- Increase and strengthen the voice of Amakhosi against GBVF.
- Monitor and support application for the Presidential Stimulus package, Youth Fund for business ventures crucial for sustainability.
- Formation and management of trusts needed to provide for a positive outcome.
- Creating cultural initiatives and vibrant local markets in rural communities
- Empowerment of rural people especially women and the youth.

27. I wish to assure Amakhosi that these resolutions are not in vain. They are currently being processed and implemented by COGTA and other role players and this will culminate into a much aggressive roll out programme. There is a pressing need to implement these resolutions and integrate them with similar rural development interventions, i.e the Invest Rural Master Plan, coordinated by the National House of Traditional Leaders.

28. Chairperson, we must appreciate the efforts from the National House of Traditional Leaders through the capable leadership of our very own Ikosi SE Mahlangu. He is on a crusade to ensure that the objectives of the Agrarian Revolution are realized.

29. We also take heed of the call to empower bo-Ndabezitha with noble initiatives emanating from the **Invest Master Plan**, which I referred to earlier. In targeting practical achievements, the plan should find expression across the Provincial and Local Government spheres, and its implementation should be accounted for, at all levels.

30. We will be discussing plausible practical mechanisms of ensuring support and incorporation of planned initiatives in the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) of Local Government as well as Strategic documents and Annual Performance Plans of

departments. The Invest Rural Master Plan is one complementary contribution to the economic reconstruction and recovery of the Province which we outlined in the State of the Province Address.

Land disputes and reconstruction of Traditional Councils

31. Two critical issues have emerged regarding land issues. The surge of land invasion and the matters of disputes regarding land jurisdiction. The preparatory work for the reconstitution of Traditional Councils includes sorting out areas of jurisdiction.

32. Much work will be done over the next coming year in assessing, determining and re-determining areas of jurisdiction in order to finalize boundaries to put the Traditional Councils on a ready scale for elections. Proper processes in addressing these matters as guided by the Department of Traditional Affairs at national, are already incorporated for planning purposes.

33. Regarding land invasions, much work has been done already in setting up mechanisms to stop the uncontrollable scourge. It must be repeatedly stated that land invasion is a criminal act and must be curbed with the full might of the law. We understand the plight of some of our communities who need land for residential purposes.

34. In addressing this need, the Department of Human Settlements working closely with Cogta and Municipalities are attending to these matters in the most appropriate and legitimate manner. Communities can be rest assured to be settled appropriately and legally as all processes are in place for this purpose.

35. The SAPS Provincial Commissioner working closely with all other law enforcement agencies in the Security Cluster should take up this matter seriously and urgently, as it is one area for deadly disputes and illicit trading on land. Criminals and bogus headmen are taking advantage, and the legitimately recognized senior traditional leaders are being ignored.

36. MEC for Community Safety, Security and Liaison shall urgently assess the current arrangements in place including functionality of structures at Provincial and local levels for monitoring and oversight over these illegal activities. There must be a drive to ensure that each Station Commander knows and understands, who the legally recognized traditional leader, the headmen and head women are in the area. Furthermore what their functions are which they carry, as a measure to alert law enforcement agencies.

37. The possible involvement of headmen and headwomen in the Community Policing Forums (CPF's) and other Multi Agency

Mechanisms should be one step to the right direction. This will ensure that the role of traditional leaders in assisting Government is not ignored and that it should be taken seriously.

38. Action-packed reports for law enforcement should be monitored and frequently evaluated. Those placing others illegally and unethically taking bribes in exchange of these illicit transactions, MUST face the full might of the law.

Participation in the District Development Model.

39. Chairperson, Mpumalanga has adopted the District Development Model also known as *Khawuleza*, an accelerated service delivery mechanism. It is an integrated system coordinated at the District level, and is gaining momentum.

40. The DDM is an integrated service delivery approach that thrives on sharing resources to deliver services, without wastage. The Districts are responsible for coordination, from the planning to the implementation stage. Amakhosi are key stakeholders for the effective functionality of the DDM especially in rural areas, and therefore your participation bo-Ndabezitha will give it an impetus.

41. Participation of Amakhosi in other entities such as the Special Economic Zone (SEZ), the Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency (MEGA), and the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) is crucial.

42. It gives me pleasure to provide feedback of the steps we have taken to pave a way for the participation of Bo-Ndabezitha in the DDM, through workshops. A team of officials from COGTA visited the three Local Houses in November last year to conduct DDM workshops.

43. We hope the valuable lessons drawn from these workshops have not only prepared you for the DDM, but will spur you into action to participate meaningfully on Local Government matters, in accordance with Section 81 of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act.

Key legislation

44. Chairperson, it gives me pleasure to inform this house that the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act was assented to by the President of the Republic and published in the Government Gazette No. 42865 of 28 November 2019 as Act No. No.3 of 2019. The Act came into effect as from 1 April 2021. This Act marks a new era for the recognition of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders in the country and in Mpumalanga.

45. Furthermore it forms the basis for the establishment of the House of Traditional Khoi-San Leaders and a Commission. The Khoi-San Commission on the Traditional Leadership has been established. Our Provincial Government will be guided by the National Government on how to deal with the requests sent by the Khoi San communities for recognition as Traditional Leaders.

46. The Department of Traditional Affairs at national has begun the process of planning for the reconstitution of all traditional Councils in the country, with the advent of the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act coming into effect from 01 April 2021.

47. Accordingly, all Provincial departments of COGTA in the country were lined up to produce credible plans to support this exercise. We should all remember that we have had a void in the reconstitution or re-election of Traditional Councils for far too long, owing to the lack of framework which should provide a common yardstick having regard to varying dynamics in each province.

48. Some provinces ended-up with their own made-up frameworks and protocols that were eventually questionable when subjected to the scrutiny of the law. Some provinces could

not complete this exercise for the reconstitution of Kings' Councils, just like in our Province, owing to the lack of a common legitimate framework that is consistent with prevailing laws.

49. The Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act, 2019 has enabled the possibility for this common framework for such reconstitution of Traditional Councils but also ensuring that such structures are in place for the Kingdoms, where Kings Councils shall be constituted. This is in line with the doctrine of seeping democracy and improving the governance of the affairs of traditional communities in line with the Constitution of the Republic.

50. Pre-planning has already begun towards the 2022 horizon which shall be followed by the extensive consultation of all stakeholders and role players to ensure the process not only become a success, but is legitimate, free and fair.

Prevention of fatalities in the Ingoma practice

51. Chairperson, the number of fatalities that occur at the initiation schools has created a fertile ground of contestation, with those opposing this old age cultural practice, calling for its abolishment. Our position as government is that all cultural practices must be respected. The initiation cultural practice is not an exception.

52. However, the fatalities that occur during the practice cannot be ignored. Several measures have been undertaken to prevent the loss of lives of the young initiates, yet fatalities still occur. In an attempt to intensify these measures, Parliament passed the Customary Initiation Bill in March this year. This will culminate into signing of this bill into law by the President.

53. This piece of legislation provides for the establishment of Provincial Initiation Coordinating Committees (PICCs), to monitor compliance to the customary initiation legislation. In view of this developments, the Department of COGTA, working with the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders must work together to give effect to the establishment of the Committee, taking into consideration how it should be constituted and advise EXCO on progress made.

54. Chairperson, the effective functionality of the Committee will serve as a pillar to rid off the ingoma practice as a death-knell for young initiates in Mpumalanga.

GBVF scourge

55. Chairperson, anger, as the late American actor, John Singleton, argued it, ***is an emotion that if you carry it around for a long period of time, it doesn't allow you to live.*** Likewise we are an angry nation, and will remain so as long as if pain is inflicted to a woman or a child.

56. GBVF is a scourge that continues to threaten the health and safety of women and children. We commend you Chairperson and wonkhe amakhosi for speaking out against this scourge in our society. Your voice is loud enough to conscientize a heatless perpetrator about his atrocious and inhumane behaviour.

57. We also commend abo-Ndlunkhulu, through the Emakhosikati Structure for their efforts in this war. We are inspired by the rising noise of Men in our society whose voices echo the anti-GBVF chorus made. A collaboration between Emakhosikati Structure and the Men's Sector of the South African National Aids Council to establish Men's Parliaments in all the 60 Traditional Councils will galvanize every man in our society to close rank, until the perpetrators have no where to hide.

Conclusion

58. As I conclude Chairperson, I take a bow for your relentless efforts of advancing the cause of communities in your area of jurisdiction. We may not thank you enough in executing this thankless task.

59. We remain committed as the Provincial Government to work with you bo-Ndabezitha, even in this period, pregnant with so many challenges and anxiety. But as we walk side by side, pulling together, victory is certain.

Hha khensa.