

Premier Mabuza opens the House of Traditional Leaders at the Mpumalanga Legislature, 22 March 2013

Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, Kgoshi Mokoena;

Deputy Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, Inkosi Ngomane;

Members of the Executive Council;

Honourable Members of the Legislature;

Honourable Members of Parliament;

Honourable Mayors, Councillors and the Leadership of SALGA

Our esteemed Traditional Leaders;

The Director General of the Province and Heads of Departments;

Distinguished Guests and all dignitaries present here today;

Compatriots and friends;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

1. Honourable Members of the House, let me start off by pointing out that the Provincial and Local Houses of Traditional Leaders were reconstituted mid last year where Kgoshi LM Mokoena and Inkosi SG Ngomane were elected as Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Provincial House respectively.
2. On behalf of the Provincial Government, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Chairperson and his newly elected Executive Committee Members, including those Members in Local Houses on their appointment to the leadership position.
3. We really wish them well in their new roles which, I believe that, they will discharge the new responsibilities with distinctions.
4. Let me also extend our gratitude to the previous Committee, under the stewardship of Ikosi SE Mahlangu, for captaining the House when you were requested to do so. We say, once more, thank you for contributions and definitely such contributions with your Committee won't go unnoticed.

5. Honourable Chairperson and Members of the House, since the advent of the new dispensation, every year around this time, we assemble together here in this august House to do two important things:

- *Firstly*, to assess our performance with regard to the implementation of the priorities that we have set for ourselves at the beginning of the financial year; and
- *Secondly*, to set new priorities for the year lying ahead.

6. Therefore, it goes without saying that this sitting of the House today is also expected to be seized with these similar tasks.

7. Honourable Chairperson of the House, before I dwell on the issues that were raised in the previous opening of the House and priorities for the upcoming year, allow me, to once again reiterate the importance of the Traditional Leadership within our society.

8. This is an institution that, as Africans, view it as the rightful custodian of our cultures, traditions, customs and values.

9. Of course, it is an institution that defines our identity as African people.

10. It is an institution that has always been better placed to glue society together and promote harmony and respect for all human beings irrespective of their creed.
11. It is an institution that fought side by side with the glorious movement of the people in the struggles against apartheid – struggles to protect and defend the assets, rights and interests of their subjects.
12. Talking of rights, yesterday we were celebrating and commemorating **Human Rights Day** – an important day in our political calendar.
13. All of us are aware that those rights were never given on a silver platter. Instead, our people, including the House of Traditional Leaders, had to wage bitter struggles to reclaim them from those who usurped them.
14. Honourable Chairperson, it is this understanding that prompted the Ruling Party to take concrete steps aimed at protecting and developing the institution of Traditional Leadership so that this institution can continue
 - To defend and protects these hard-earned human rights; the principles of democracy and all the liberties that must be enjoyed by all South Africans;

- To be a partner in the struggles against unemployment, poverty and inequality – ills that are a pain in the flesh of our people;
- To be that inner voice which constantly reminds us of who we are and how to grow and develop an African child in this complex modern society, and most importantly, how do we prepare an African child to be an embodiment of this future society that is envisaged in the Freedom Charter.

15. Honourable Chairperson, for the House to be able to live up to these expectations that I have just highlighted, it is evident that, as government, we have to continue assisting the House to reclaim its appropriate position within communities where Traditional Leaders have jurisdiction. This will include, among other things:

- Creating stability in traditional leadership;
- Strengthening the capacity of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders in all respects; and
- Developing plans and programmes to respond to the needs of people living in areas over which Traditional Leaders have jurisdiction.

2012/13 Performance Assessment

Creating stability in traditional leadership

16. Honourable Members of the House, we have pointed out many a time on different platforms that instability in Traditional Leadership compromises what this institution stand for in the broader society.
17. Conflicts and claims in the royal families have shown that, over time, they result in communities not only getting confused but also drawn to the fray which ordinarily does not involve them.
18. In many cases such conflicts and disputes have, and still continue, to undermine growth and development of the affected communities.
19. Fortunately, as a Province, we have already established a **Provincial Committee** that is busy handling all cases of disputes and claims over Traditional Leadership. This is the Committee that I have submitted before this House on the occasion of the previous opening session.
20. We reported that there are **124 cases** that are before the Committee for consideration – cases that will be dealt with over a period of four years.

21. Of the **21 cases** that were reported to be at their final stages by then, I am pleased to report that the Committee has managed to finalise **18 disputes** to date.
22. Flowing from this process, we have seen the **recognition** and inauguration of Inkosi MA Mahlobo of Mahlobo Traditional Council and Inkosi MT Yende of Ogenyaneni Traditional Council respectively.
23. Honourable Chairperson, let me take this opportunity to congratulate all the newly recognised and inaugurated Chiefs. I wish them well in their new and demanding role. I hope and trust that they will work together with government and other stakeholders to grow and develop communities in their areas of jurisdiction.
24. For those cases that are still outstanding, government will, through the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the Committee on Disputes, ensure that processes are expedited so that those cases are put to rest and allow communities to spend their energies and efforts on self-development.

Strengthening the capacity of the Provincial House of the Traditional Leaders

25. Honourable Chairperson of the House, this brings me to the other important area of work – the need to strengthen the capacity of the institution of Traditional Leadership so that its integrity and credibility is restored, especially in the eyes of those people who have lost hope in it, individually or collectively so.

26. To this end, together with the House, we have, over a period of time, developed packages to support and strengthen the capacity of this institution – support packages targeting areas such as, *inter alia*, **leadership; management; infrastructure and other administrative related issues.**

27. In the previous speech which I delivered before this House, one pointed out that government has already taken few initiatives geared towards providing support to Traditional Leaders.

28. Among others, Honourable Chairperson of the House, government is continuing to provide support to the Executive Committee of the House with **tools of trade.**

29. We have recently approved a policy on tools of trade for Traditional Leaders. It is a policy that will be implemented in four phases.

30. The first phase focuses on the purchasing of vehicles for Traditional Leaders. Renovations of offices fall under phase two. The third phase will be looking at the salaries of Headmen and last phase will be dealing with salaries and benefits of personnel employed in Traditional Councils.
31. Honourable Chairperson of the House, as we all know, phase one of this policy is already in motion.
32. Over and above of the vehicles that we bought for Amakhosi in the previous financial year, we have recently acquired vehicles for all the Executive Members and such vehicles will be handed over to the Members immediately after this address.
33. The rationale for this move is that the House has declared all Executive Members as full time and, therefore, such assistance was deemed fit in the light of this new development.
34. As a province we are pleased to announce that the plight of izinduna has been attended to. We have increased **R1 080.33 to R2 000.00** per month with immediate effect.

35. Honourable Members of the House, the details of the other phases will be communicated to Members in due course and this will also include developments on issues which the Minister is busy investigating as we speak.

36. This involves, in the main, most of the issues that I have just touched above on support to Traditional Leaders.

Plans and Programmes to respond to the needs of people: SOPA priorities

37. Having said that, Honourable Chairperson, let me now turn my attention to the third key area of focus, namely, plans and programmes to respond to the needs of people where Traditional Leaders have jurisdiction.

38. In Post 1994, as a country, we agreed that the biggest challenges that are confronting our people in this epoch are unemployment, poverty and inequality.

39. We further agreed to work together in the fight against the reductions of these triple related challenges.

40. The dictum or rallying phrase of the Ruling Party's 2009 Manifesto captures the sentiment very well when it says "Working together we can do more".

41. Since my inauguration as the Premier of this Province, this is the clarion call that I have been, and still, making to all stakeholders, particularly the Traditional Leaders to work with government in translating the Manifesto priorities into reality.

42. To illustrate this point, in the previous address when opening this House I said:

"...the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequalities are in persistent...Going forward, as government, we expect to see our veered Traditional Leaders working very closely with us and our agencies in the fight against unemployment, poverty and inequalities".

43. Even today, I am still making the very same call to all the Members of the House.

44. Honourable Chairperson, on the first of March this year, in the State of the Province Address, I once more, as I did in the previous addresses, outlined all those possible areas of cooperation between government and Traditional Leaders.

On creating an inclusive economy

45. With regard to creating an inclusive economy, one emphasised again the issues of infrastructure development as an important stimulus for job creation.
46. Government will be rolling out quite a number of infrastructure projects in your different areas of jurisdiction and the participation of the Traditional Leadership will be extremely crucial.
47. There are numerous economic initiatives that are highlighted in SOPA – initiatives that are targeting cooperatives and small business development.
48. Similarly, this is another window of opportunity for Traditional Leaders to participate meaningfully.
49. In addition, there are certain areas of your jurisdiction where mining activities are taking place. In the recent Provincial Mining Indaba, the Minister of Mineral Resources and I agreed to call an Imbizo of Amakhosi wherein we will be looking at, among other things, the role of the institution of Traditional Leadership in the mining sector.
50. We intend to convene the Imbizo before the end of June 2013 so that Traditional Leaders are provided a platform to air their views on this matter.

On Rural development and food security

51. Honourable Chairperson of the House, the State of the Province also raises other areas of collaboration on Rural Development and food security through Land and Agrarian Reform.

52. As we all know by now, the majority of the sites for the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme, which also includes the Masibuyele Emasimni and Masibuyele Esibayeni Programmes, fall under the jurisdiction of many Traditional Leaders.

53. If there is one programme that has the capacity to change the lives of the rural masses for the better, it is the CRDP.

54. In the areas where this programme is being implemented, we are starting to observe the lives of those who have been touched by this programme to be, slowly but surely, improving for the better.

55. As we said in the previous address:

"The programme of Masibuyele Emasimini and CRDP, unfortunately, depend on our joint efforts, particularly on community mobilisation – an activity which is better placed in the hands of our Traditional Leaders"

56. Let take this opportunity to thank all those Traditional Councils that are involved in this programme. Working together we can do more.
57. Honourable Members of the House, I am still appealing to this House to get involved in this programme. I wish to see Traditional Councils participating in the activities of the Council of Stakeholders – forums that bring all players together.
58. My recent experience when visiting provincial infrastructure projects, I realised that most of the problems that I have observed on site were caused, largely, by absence of effective governance and monitoring, including lack of ownership of these projects by communities.
59. Therefore, it is important that, together with Traditional Leaders, we make our governance structures functional and effective so that we can circumvent problems relating to planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
60. Honourable Chairperson, SOPA also reminded us of the centenary of the Land Act of 1913 and its implication on the land owned by our people and that held in trust by Traditional Leaders.

61. Today we are sitting with serious challenges of inequality in the redistribution of land.

62. And this is an impediment to our growth and development as a people.

63. It is, therefore, imperative that this House also participate in Land Reform activities and initiatives that are pursued by government.

On education

64. Honourable Chairperson, education is another priority which our people have mandated the Ruling Party to pay special attention on.

65. We did indicate in the past that for effective teaching and learning to take place:

- Our teachers and learners must be in class during school hours;
- Our learners must be protected from drug abuse and other unbecoming tendencies
- Our learners must be taught respect for elders, teachers, one another and any human being.

66. As custodian of good social values, Traditional Leaders must continue to strengthen all structures of education.

67. Let there be visible moulding campaigns and programmes that are targeting young people in our communities.

68. Let us use all platforms at our disposal to educate, train and inculcate the culture of good behaviour to parents, teachers and our learners.

69. To those Traditional Leaders who are highly involved in school programmes, on behalf of government, I wish to extend our gratitude and deep appreciation for your good work. The improvement of results is a testimony of your sterling work.

70. Let me urge and encourage all Members of this House to get involved in the education of our children. It is their future and our future too.

On health

71. Honourable Chairperson, SOPA also raised health issues which demand the participation of the Traditional Leaders.

72. Areas of serious concern remain HIV and AIDs pandemic, obesity and TB.

73. According to the latest figures, we are still second after the Province of KZN, with Gert Sibande being the highest among the three districts and Mkhondo municipality now being the highest in the country at 46.1% as compared to 38,8% in 2010.

74. What must be noted is that while KZN is the highest in the country, however, it has started to show signs of decline since their interventions whereas, in our case, the prevalence cases are increasing.

75. Therefore, government and the House will need to intensify the fight against this killer disease.

76. We need to upscale our Campaigns, particularly the '**Male Circumcision Campaign**'. We have set ourselves a target of half a million males undergoing circumcision this year.

77. Therefore, together, we must work very hard to ensure that this target is met. Let us continue to use every public platform to create awareness about all these killer disease. Let us urge our people to live healthy lifestyles because it is for their own good.

On Crime

78. Honourable Chairperson of the House and Members, the fight against crime and corruption remains a priority in the integrated approach by Government to accomplish the goal of a better life for all and ensure that South African are able to feel safe in their homes, their places of work, their communities and in their own streets.
79. Crime continues to bedevil a number of communities falling under your areas of jurisdiction. Peace and stability in the country depends on our efforts in addressing the scourge of crime.
80. To this end, the ANC-led government has put together a package of intervention mechanisms which seem to be paying dividends.
81. This includes interventions such as capacity building of human capital; change management; revamping of different strategies in areas such Border Management; stock theft; immigration and public participation.
82. Further interventions on integrated social crime prevention on Rural Safety; Vulnerable groups; Victim friendly facilities; School safety and contact crime have been implemented with a degree of success.

83. Your participation in the programmes aimed at fighting crime in all its facets is highly welcomed. The Institution of Traditional Leadership must find space to intensify its participation in the government institution meant to deal with issues of crime.
84. Structures like community policing fora or rural safety fora are some of these platforms. The war against crime cannot be won unless we all join hand in making our efforts work.
85. There is new disturbing development that shows that on the reported crime incidents domestic violence, rape and abuse is on the increase.
86. The domestic violence perpetrated against women and girl children require that all the citizens of province to take a stand and say NO! These acts have no place in our society.
87. What is more worrying is that a number of these cases are withdrawn before they are presented to courts.
88. It is indeed a serious concern because it is an exercise in futility if perpetrators are not brought to book.
89. As leaders in your own right, I enjoin you to work with our government to ensure that the rights of the weak and vulnerable individuals are protected at all times

90. As a province we shall work with all law enforcement agencies, traditional leaders, business, civil society and communities broadly to take the fight against crime to door stop of criminals and we want to say Mpumalanga is not and will not be a safe haven for criminals. *Ayikho impunga yehlathi !!!*

Local Government

91. Honourable Chairperson of the House and Members, the province continues to work closely with the Institution of Traditional Leaders on government programmes.

92. Amakhosi are expected to make a contribution during development of the municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDPs).

93. The IDPs will be enriched through your participation because in you we have champions of people's development in your areas of jurisdiction.

94. This important development plan of the municipalities should include the needs of your communities from issues of access to basic services like water, sanitation, electricity, housing and roads.

95. We have noted with appreciation the improved levels of your participation in the municipal IDP processes and urge those who are missing in the process to grab this opportunity.
96. Your participation in the matters of community development working side by side with the councillors is starting to bear fruits. We urge all Amakhosi to use the existing governance institution like ward committees, rural safety forum, school governing bodies
97. In the last year the province has engaged with your excellences on matters of integrated human settlements. The joint meeting of Amakhosi with the provincial government led the then MECs of COGTA and Human Settlements took a number of resolutions on how to collaborate in this area of work. We have to move with speed in the implementation of our resolutions.
98. Amongst others the department will assist the municipalities to develop a spatial development framework including land use management schemes in all the areas under the jurisdiction of Amakhosi.

99. Equally Amakhosi will make well suited land for the purposes of integrated human settlements. Jointly we shall act decisively to eradicate unplanned settlement and illegal sites allocation in many areas under the jurisdiction of Amakhosi.

100. I am pleased to note that in the next few days all our municipalities will sign an agreement with all traditional leaders on how to collaborate on matters development.

101. As government we need to be supported by your excellences during the implementation of our programme and projects.

102. Amakhosi as you were part of planning processes we shall ensure that that you aware about all government projects that are implemented within your communities so as to exercise oversight and guidance.

103. The importance of your participation in the municipal councils cannot be over-emphasized. We convened district meetings of all Community Development Workers, Traditional Leaders, Councillors and ward committee representatives to find better mechanism to strengthen citizen engagement on matters of development at a ward level.

104. We are quite aware that the matter of your participation in Nkangala remains unresolved. I have directed the MEC of COGTA, Mr. SPD Skhosana and the Executive Mayor of the District of Nkangala to engage with the local house to conclude all outstanding issues as soon as possible.

105. We have proven that working together we can do more to changes the lives of people for the better. The areas of Masibuyele Emasimini, the CRDP and education are classical examples that our partnership is working and can be extended to other areas.

106. There are areas of weakness in this partnership that we must strengthen. In consultation with our Mpumalanga Provincial House of Traditional Leadership, we shall develop and implement a provincial framework on the participation of Amakhosi on government programme.

107. Honourable Chairperson of the House and Members, over the last few weeks, the province has experienced violent protests. In the main the issues raised range from the inconsistent or lack of water supply, poor state of our roads, housing delivery and levels of unemployment.

108. The South African Institute on Race Relations on its research report titled *Two Scenarios for the of South Africa* released on the 14th January 2013, argues at length that the protests arise not from the failure of the Government's service-delivery efforts but rather from the success of these efforts.

109. *Abaphikisana nenqubekela phambili nezimbangi zethu kwezepolitiki bathi kwakungcono ngesithi sobandlululo.* Our detractors and opposition continue to deny that South Africa is better today than yesterday. These assertions are false and malicious.

110. Over nineteen years later, we can boldly say that we have done very well. As the party leading government we are first to admit that more still needs to be done to realise the ideal of a better life for all.

111. This government respect the constitutional right for every citizen to march peaceful and unharmed.

112. We cannot allow violence, wanton destruction of property, loss of lives and recently threatening of the state authority wherein protesters contemplate burning or attacking state institutions.

113. Working together with Amakhosi, we need to send a clear message that some protesters are undermining this fundamental right through their actions and we shall not hesitate to enforce the rule of law.

114. As we are taking our last mile of this 4th ANC led government, we are determined in dealing with service delivery backlogs in all the areas of the province including those falling under the areas of traditional communities. We are hard at work to ensure that:

- a. All our people have access to water services by 2014.
- b. Sanitation backlogs are eradicated in all formal settlements and deal with the state of all over capitated waste water treatment works.
- c. Accelerate the refuse removal by implementing municipal public works programme and promoting clean towns, townships and villages programme. This include improving the internal access roads
- d. Extend electrification to the remaining households through partnership with the Department of Energy.
- e. Address all the infrastructure issues associated with disasters in Ehlanzeni.

Nation building

115. Honourable Chairperson, we are a nation in the making.

116. We are busy creating a future society that will be underpinned by the principles of democracy, liberty and respect for human rights.

117. These must be core to our value system, basically enhancing our 'UBUNTU' principles.

118. Therefore, together with Traditional Leaders, we have to continue drawing from the strengths of our different cultures and heritage to build a united society that respect the rule of law.

119. We have to continue using our national symbols and national recognised holidays to build a nation that prides itself of its unity in diversity.

120. Together with the institution of the Traditional Leadership, let us utilise the Cultural Hub that is underway to preserve and promote our different cultures, allowing them to co-exist in this beautiful land that belong to all of us.

Conclusion

121. Honourable Chairperson, let me conclude by using the same statement that I used when closing the previous opening session because of its profoundness and relevance even today:

“As government, we will never underestimate the role that needs to be played by our Traditional Leaders and institutions in healing many of the social ills that face our communities.

As custodian of indigenous knowledge, Traditional Leaders must not abdicate their role of providing the necessary leadership on issues of culture, customs, traditions and values”.

122. Let us not forget that working together we can do more.

123. All the best to the new leadership and Members of the House as you get ready to tackle the challenges that are lying ahead.

124. The sitting of the Mpumalanga Provincial House of Traditional Leaders is now officially opened.

125. Ngiyabonga!