

Provincial Chairperson of the House of Traditional
Leaders Kgoshi Mokoena

Deputy National Chairperson of the House of
Traditional Leaders Ikosi S E Mahlangu

Deputy Provincial Chairperson of the House of
Traditional Leaders Inkosi S G Ngomane

Ubukhosi bonke obukhona lapha phakathi kwethu

Ubukhosi bendlu yakwaKhumalo obuhambele lomcimbi buvela
KwaZulu.

Honourable Members of the Legislature

Members of the Executive Council

Executive Mayors and Councillors present here today

The Director-General of the Province, Mr Thulani

Mdakane

HODs and Municipal Managers

Representatives from various organisations

Comrades and compatriots

Manene namaNenekazi

Ladies and Gentlemen

Sanibonani

Good Morning,

Lotshani,

Dumelang;

Avuxen

The Context

1. Honourable Chairperson, we are gathered here today to celebrate yet another very important milestone in our journey towards the realization of the national democratic society which is underpinned by a constitution that recognizes the importance of the existence of institutions like the House of Traditional Leaders. Chapter 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that the status and the roles of traditional leadership according to customary law are recognized.
2. To this end our government acknowledges the critical role of traditional leadership institutions in South Africa's constitutional democracy and in communities, particularly in relation to the rural development strategy.
3. Honourable Chairperson, when writing the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the ruling party the ANC was very mindful of the need to find a way that would include Ubukhosi in the Constitution as a separate but inclusive domain of authority that will govern the same people in the same space as your democratically elected leaders. We therefore have always argued that rather seeing traditional authority as contradicting democracy, we believe that it does provide the bedrock upon which to construct and expand representative democracy.

4. Ours Honourable Chairperson is a mixed government that incorporates cooperative interaction among distinct and relatively autonomous government institutions under our constitutional democracy. We will therefore continue to defend Indlu YoBukhosi and support it the best way we can.
5. Honourable Chairperson I am told that early this month under your leadership, Amakhosi converged in Middleburg, Steve Tshwete Local Municipality to take stock of the achievements since the establishment of the House of Traditional Leaders in Mpumalanga 21 years ago and to redefine its role in the third decade of our democratic dispensation. I look forward to hear from you, particular your views on how we should together chart the way forward in our endless efforts to bring a better life for all our people in Mpumalanga.

Our Gains

6. Honourable Chairperson, the past two decades of the existence of this House have been characterized by the significant gains that we have made in the improvement of the working conditions of Amakhosi. These gains could not have been achieved without the mutual working relationship between our provincial government and Amakhosi and the quality leadership provided by the successive Chairpersons, from 1994 until your tenure Kgoshi Mokoena.

7. As we journeyed together, we tapped in your wisdom for guidance to tackle successfully so many socio-economic challenges confronting our rural communities, which would be impossible, had it not been for your support. To the former Chairpersons and former members of the Executive of the House, some of whom are with us here whilst others are no longer with us, we salute you for your commitment to serve the House and our communities with distinction.
8. We will forever be indebted to your quality leadership. And as we march towards the third decade since the establishment of the House and the democratic dispensation of our country, we wish to renew our commitment to support you with all means possible, for the attainment of your indaba resolutions and the legislative mandate stipulated in the Constitution and in your developmental initiatives of the rural communities.
9. Our gathering here today marks our demonstration of our strongest belief and our unfaltering desire to deepen participatory democracy and forge partnerships with our communities in their own villages and rural settlements.
10. At the heart of this desire is our determination and steadfastness to work tirelessly in pursuit of the only common goal that has brought us here, ***the betterment of the lives of our citizens throughout the province and in particular those residing in poor rural and semi-rural communities.***

11. We are doing this Honourable Amakhosi mindful of the very long and sometimes treacherous walk to our destination, the economic freedom of our people. When we, together, led our people out of the proverbial land of Egypt, the Apartheid South Africa in 1994, we knew very well that this was just the beginning of a protracted mission to take our people, once more together, to the land of honey and goodness.

12. We have seen and conquered the first mountain together, the political emancipation of our people from the bondage of oppression and human suffering and now we have guarantees of human rights and individual liberties. We are now scaling the second mountain; that of economic freedom, step by step, assured of our final victory.

13. We have seen this mountain and we can smell victory, yet each day brings with it challenges that need single mindedness, common vision and willingness to sacrifice from all of us so that we can reach the mountain top. Not all of us may reach the mountain top, however we are paving the way so that our children and their children's children can be guaranteed of a better life for all. We are determined to achieve this and nothing will stand on our way.

Land Claims

14. Hononurable Chairpersons remarkable progress has been made in the settlement of land claims in our province. During the period between the beginning of December 2015 until the end of the very same month in 2015, 21 land claims were successfully settled in Mpumalanga province.
15. Of these claims 18 were in respect of rural land and 3 in respect of urban land. 530 individuals from 89 households, of which 49 are female headed, benefitted from the settlement of these claims. One thousand four hundred and ninety nine hectares were awarded at a cost of R25 million.
16. Whilst this should be lauded as the greatest achievement in such a short space of time, let me hasten to caution that during the past we have seen a disturbing pattern where our people are given back to what rightfully belongs to them only, for them to sign lease agreements with the very same people from whom the land was bought.

17. More often than not these lease agreements have ridiculous terms and conditions which do not benefit the very same people our government is trying to help. Instead of signing short to medium terms agreements not exceeding 5 years, so that they can learn from the original farmer and take over after the lease have lapsed, they sign 30 years lease agreement for pittance payments.
18. Honourable Chairperson sometimes the extreme opposite is also true. People inherit highly productive land from these settlement agreements, with very high productive yield, only to be destroyed and be left fallow with little or no production at all.
19. We are calling upon Amakhosi to intervene in these circumstances and make sure that productive land whether from land settlements or just communal land is efficiently utilized for agricultural production.
20. Honourable Chairperson, as a nation we are sometimes faced with challenges that are largely the product of our history. We see racism raising its ugly head from a very minority of people who still want to hang to the past and we condemn this with the contempt it deserves.

21. However, the other side of the very same coin is our failure to bury ethnic and tribal discrimination. Tribal and ethnicity tendencies are a serious cause for concern. We are a diverse rainbow nation and we derive our strength from this diversity.

22. We appeal to Amakhosi to promote social cohesion and play a vital role in the fight against internalized and externalized xenophobia. We must welcome our brothers and sisters from wherever they come from and be tolerant of any other person who may not speak our language or share our culture

The Road Ahead

23. We are facing the gale and ghastly winds accompanied by violent storms and our efforts are pitted against a global economic downturn especially in our contracting mining and agricultural sectors, and of course, the devastating drought that threatens to reverse our gains in the areas of water provision and agricultural production.

24. Our province is facing severe drought of untold proportions. We are told that the last time we had a drought of this magnitude was more than 100 years ago. We have seen improvement in the rain fall during the past two months; however this has come too late and too little for our crop farming communities.
25. When it became obvious that our emerging farmers were losing their livestock in big numbers due to severe drought, our government set aside R38 million for drought relief programmes. The national department of rural development also came into this space and gave their support to our farmers.
26. Honourable Chairperson it is now obvious that challenges caused by global warming will become a constant phenomenon in future and we therefore need to plan properly for such natural eventualities.
27. These disasters may take the form of severe drought as we are currently experiencing or, in some instances may become severe storms and floods. I expect both COGTA and the department of Agriculture to come up with a long term plan on how to deal with any of these calamities.

28. We appeal to Amakhosi to work with government in assisting our emerging commercial and subsistence farmers who are the worst affected by this drought to try and minimize the impact and see them through this very difficult period. In the very same vein we would like to request Amakhosi to appeal to their subjects to help conserve and save water by making sure that water leakage are reported to municipalities and no communal taps are left running unattended.

29. Honourable Chairperson and Honourable Amakhosi, your subjects are facing multiple challenges, some are very complex in nature whilst others are common daily struggles of our lives.

30. Despite all our efforts, the challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic remain a serious threat to our survival as a nation. Mpumalanga remains the second province with the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the country. Whilst we have seen stability in some areas, other regions are still recording high figures of HIV/AIDS prevalence rate.

31. Government alone cannot tackle this problem. This is a societal challenge which needs all of us to find better ways of dealing with it. I call upon all Amakhosi and Izinduna to actively become participants in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases like TB.

32. Of equal importance we need to also fight against HIV/AIDS stigma. One of the reasons why we are not winning this battle against this disease is because of the stigma that is attached to it.

33. Stigma drives this disease underground forcing people not want to know their status and those who are aware of it hide it and not share with their partners.
34. We must show those who are affected and or infected that they remain valuable members of our society, be compassionate and take good care of those who need our love and care.
35. Honourable Chairperson, to ensure that the real-time needs of our citizens particularly those from rural and semi-rural areas find expression in our work as provincial government, we have successfully launched **Operation Vuka Sisebente** – Mpumalanga’s development coordinating model.
36. **Operation Vuka Sisebente** aims to integrate the services of government through the utilisation of functional war rooms at ward, local and provincial government levels.
37. In order to achieve this objective, Honourable Chairperson, we invite Ubukhosi and their subjects to visit these ward war rooms that operate as service delivery engines set up by different stakeholders including Amakhosi nezinduna in order to deliver a fully coordinated and integrated basket of services.

38. We invite you to raise issues that must be brought to the attention of government. As part of our public representatives please follow up and ensure that all issues raised are responded to within a very short space of time at least a month.
39. Honourable Chairperson when opening the very same House last year, I made a promise that my government will be taking very serious steps in providing Amakhosi with tools that will make their working conditions much bearable.
40. Today I am happy to report to the house that we have fulfilled our commitment in this regard. Fifty eight (58) vehicles were delivered in November during a function at the Mbombela Stadium. Two vehicles were later delivered to izingwenyama in their palaces.
41. Despite constrained financial resources, we worked hard to deliver on this commitment and I take joy to the fact that Amakhosi were afforded an opportunity to make their own choices with regard to the vehicles that best suit their circumstances. This support forms part of the tools of trade for you to serve your subjects efficiently and effectively. Moreover, it is in line with our commitment to restore your dignity, trampled upon by the apartheid and colonialism systems.

42. On the same important occasion for the opening of the house, I also made a commitment to hand over five cattle in each Traditional Council to promote farming as part of the Masibuyel' Esibayeni programme.

Honourable Chairperson it is an honour for me to report to the house that 65 cattle have already been delivered in the first phase of this programme.

43. Thirty five (35) cattle were delivered in November to the two Izingwenyama and Amakhosi serving in the Executive and the Chairpersons of the Local Houses. In February, we started implementing the second phase I would like to appeal to all Amakhosi to be patient. Your five cattle are on their way.

44. Our commitment to restore the dignity of Amakhosi knows no boundaries. Notwithstanding the limited resources at our disposal, we are pulling out all stops to make this commitment a reality. We have constructed twenty three (23) Traditional Council offices which were in a bad state over the past two decades.

45. As part of this continued support, we are in the process of finalizing the construction of four (4) offices in the year under review. In the new financial year, three (3) new offices are earmarked for construction in the three districts. Progress has been made in the refurbishment of five (5) Traditional Councils and the palaces of the two Izingwenyama.

46. We have observed with appreciation the crucial role of the offices of Amakhosi in bringing services closer to the people in the rural areas. Days of travelling long distances and stand in long queues are becoming a thing of the past. There is value for money in this process. The offices serve as service delivery points for the rural communities. As government, we commend Amakhosi for this good gesture.

47. Honourable Chairperson, our zero-tolerance towards death cases in the initiation schools in Mpumalanga became a resounding success this year.

Unlike in the previous years, where death cases were reported, last year we recorded a death-free season in all areas where ingoma took place.

48. This success could not have been possible had it not been the wisdom of Amakhosi who championed the cause of ensuring that all ingoma practitioners comply with precautionary procedures to prevent possible deaths, as expressed in the Ingoma Act of 2011.

49. We commend you, as the Chairperson of the House, all Amakhosi, the Ingoma Forum and all other role players for contributing to this milestone achievement of making Mpumalanga, a true place of the rising sun. Indeed when a solution was sought to break the vicious cycle of deaths in the Ingoma, we in the Mpumalanga Province had to take lead, and we salute you for guiding the process with your wisdom to end this scourge.

50. Other provinces will take lessons from us! We will depend on your wisdom as we work together to save the lives of our young boys in the future.
51. Ukusoka is our culture. As the custodian of our cultures, we depend on you to guide us in the practice and protect our culture against unscrupulous individuals whose desire to make money through these cultures, leave parents heart-broken for losing young boys.
52. Our provincial government will continue to support cultural ceremonies (ummemo) as a vehicle through which our people are taught about the importance of these cultures and the proper practice as a way of life. We believe many lives will be saved when these cultural ceremonies are held.
53. The dominant element in these ceremonies must be the preservation of culture and customs, indigenous knowledge and heritage, a function reserved for Amakhosi. We must ensure that this preservation of our culture is done in a manner that we inculcate its values by involving the young generation as this will ensure its long term sustainability.
54. Honourable Chairperson, the economic outlook of our country remains a cause for concern, as the President, His Excellency J.G Zuma announced during the State of the Nation Address recently. South Africa is not immune from the unfavourable economic conditions. Rural communities will undoubtedly be the hardest hit as this negates prospects for economic development.

55. The President's announcement for the establishment of an agricultural project, Agri-Parks, will ignite hope that even if our people are faced with the harsh reality of the triple challenges of unemployment poverty and inequality, government is relentless in its effort to pursue economic measures that will cushion them against the poor economic conditions. With this project, our government seeks to revitalize the under-utilized land, especially in the communal areas, into full production within the next three years. The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform is expected to lead the project.

56. In my state of the province address I committed our government into a more concerted effort in reviving our agricultural fortunes through landmark projects like the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market, Fortune 40 for young farmers and others.

57. Our government has also set aside R80 million to support small and emerging businesses. Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency (MEGA) will fund economically viable projects that have a potential of creating more jobs and assist us to fight the triple challenges of rampant unemployment, poverty and inequality.

58. Land invasion remains one of our major socio-economic challenges that we are facing. We are aware that this is one of the matters of intervention which you want government to attend to as a matter of urgency. Despite the various measures that have been undertaken to address this matter, it is still persistent. The Spatial Planning Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA), introduced at national level is one of such measures. I am aware that Amakhosi are to a large extent not happy with this legislation.

59. In Mpumalanga, we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), of which Amakhosi are part of the signatories. With all these measures in mind, I would like to assure this August house that we will pursue this scourge to its logical conclusion.

60. Honourable Chairperson, the delivery of basic services such as water will never escape our radar. I have repeatedly pronounced in this sitting that access to water is a right expressed in Chapter 2 of our Constitution.

61. I am happy to report to the House that our intervention in this body of work has yielded positive results. As I indicated in the State of the Province Address, our intervention in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality has resulted in the reticulation of 14 more villages. Access to water for these villages, of which the majority are in the jurisdiction of Amakhosi, has improved remarkably.

62. In Kwamhlanga and Kwaggafontein, in the Thembisile Hani Local Municipality a number of Water schemes have been completed. More general bulk supply systems are planned for the coming year. Over R2 billion will be invested in 2016/17, in an attempt to make our commitment for the delivery of water and sanitation to all, a reality.

63. As we make these interventions, communities in the rural areas must be assured that in the eyes of this government, they are equally as important as all other communities and will never be treated as second class citizens in the implementation of water delivery plans.

64. Admittedly, the persistent drought Honourable Chairperson may impede on our water delivery plans. As we roll out the water infrastructure in pursuit of this plan, we are concerned about the drying out of water from the rivers, dams and underground water. We are grateful for the rain that has been falling in various areas of our province during the past few weeks. We are praying for more.

65. Nevertheless, we will continue with all forms of interventions, whether short or long term. Part of the R2 billion earmarked for water projects will be utilized to drill 582 boreholes in the new financial year as a disaster relief in highly distressed areas such as:

- Gomora, Dludluma, Langeloop in Nkomazi.
- Leroro, Matibidi, Shaga in Thaba Chweu
- KaMadubula, Ka-Mtahliyane in Umjindi
- Zimbabwe, Zoeknog A & B, Mphenyatsatsi in Bushbuckridge
- Kleipfontein, Mandela Msholozhi, Vreisgewaght in Thembisile Hani

66. I have just sampled these areas as examples, the list is long. As we make these interventions, we will appreciate if Amakhosi can champion the safeguarding of the boreholes against vandalism as a measure for the sustainable supply of water to mitigate any possible death of our domestic animals due to the drought.

67. Furthermore, we appeal to Amakhosi to caution the communities against wasteful use of water in the face of this drought.

68. Honourable Chairperson, I am happy to inform this August house about the finalization of all 163 registered disputes and claims by the Provincial Committee on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims. It is worth noting that the committee, under the leadership of the Chairperson, Advocate Simon Mahlangu concluded the arduous task within the stipulated five years period, which ended on 31 December 2015. We commend you for the good work.

69. Professionalism, patience and dignity characterized the manner in which you handled the claims. As we close this chapter, we appeal to all Amakhosi and the aggrieved parties to accept the outcome of the claims, whether it is in their favour or not. Furthermore, we call upon all royal families to utilize royal family structures (Lusendvo) as a mechanism for internal dispute resolution.

70. The likelihood of indignity and perpetual erosion of this age-old system of governance in the tribal communities cannot be ruled out if we fail to use the internal dispute resolution. As government and as your subjects, we are concerned about this.

71. Honourable Chairperson, let me congratulate Amakhosi in our midst who were recently inaugurated:

- Hhosi Mnisi of the Mnisi Tribal Authority and Kgoshi Malele of the Malele Tribal Authority in Bushbuckridge.
- Inkhosi Ngomane of Lugedlane Traditional Council in Nkomazi.

- Inkhosi Mthethwa (Nyambose, Jobe ka-Dingiswayo) of Madubukela Traditional Council in Mkhondo
- Kgoshigadi Lefifi of the Barolong Ba Lefifi in Dr JS Moroka.

72. We look forward to work together with you on socio-economic issues affecting your communities. On the same breath, we join the house in mourning the loss of Ikosi Mabena of Manala-Mgibe Traditional Council and Hhosi Khoza of Jongilanga. Our heartfelt condolences to the royal families for their loss. May their souls rest in peace!

73. In conclusion, I would like remind Amakhosi to urge their subjects to use the last available opportunity next month to go and register for the forthcoming local government elections. Our people should use their democratic right to choose councilors that they believe are capable of representing their interest.

I THANK YOU.