

Salutations

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

The Backdrop

1. Honourable Chairperson, before I address this House, allow me, on behalf of government, to extend our deepest condolences to the royal families of the late Kgoshi Lefifi of Barolong baLefifi and Kgosi Malele of the Malele Traditional Council. Both passed on in May last year while Hhosi Mnisi of the Mnisi Traditional Council passed on in January this year.
2. We will miss them for their guidance, their humility and their wisdom. Their death is a huge loss not only to their royal families but also to their subjects and the entire Institution of Traditional Leadership.
3. **To Kgoshi Lefifi and Kgosi Malele,** we say: **“Robalang ka kgotso!”**
4. To **Hhosi Mnisi,** we say: **‘Etlela hikurhula!’ May your memories live for ever.**
5. Honourable Chairperson and Members of the House, I have pointed out on many platforms, including at this very august House, that the importance of the institution of Traditional Leadership in South Africa cannot be overemphasised.

6. One has impressed the fact that it is an institution that dates back centuries in South Africa.
7. It's historic role and function within our society has been, and still remain, quite critical, particularly on the issue of African identity – identity which hinges on, among other things, respect and practice of customs, traditions and values embraced by society as a whole.
8. As we all know, colonialism and apartheid destroyed this important governance system of our people and replace it with a system that undermined the rights and dignity of our Traditional Leaders.
9. Mazibuko Jara, Researcher Associate in UCT Law, in his presentation about 'Traditional leadership in South Africa': The Harold Wolpe Memorial... on February 2012' summarised this statement better when he asserted that:

“Chiefs were used as collectors of colonial taxes or as mobilisers of labour for the mines. Boundaries were fixed and determined by the interests of the State and limited secession became the primary form of accountability.....

This appropriation distorted customary systems... The outcome of these distortions is that Traditional Leaders were co-opted by colonial and apartheid regimes through a process of conferring statutory powers on them.

People became subjected to colonial and apartheid systems of statutory control through ‘relative sovereignty, particularly at local government level. These powers and statutory structures formed the building blocks of the homeland system.”

Progress over the last twenty years

Governance

10. This is part of the legacy that the Ruling Party inherited from the previous regime.

11. I am talking of a legacy where the oversight role of the institution of Traditional Leadership was non-existent.

12. Yes, I am talking of a situation where the institution of Traditional Leaders did not have a say in the delivery of services to their people or other socio-economic and development matters affecting communities under their leadership.

13. Indeed, when the African National Congress came into power, the issue of the institution of Traditional Leadership was elevated because we understood its role and importance to the African people, particularly in the transformation of society going forward.

14. We also understood that that the ushering in of democracy did not suggest, in any way, that the institutions of Traditional Leadership would be replaced. Instead we viewed such an institution to be able to coexist peacefully with our new democratic dispensation.

15. It is in this context that we ensured that the new Constitution recognises the institution, status and role of Traditional Leadership.

16. Honourable Chairperson of the House, on the 27th of April 2014, South Africa will be completing 20 years under a democratic rule.

17. It will be a momentous day for all of us, as South Africans, because it marks an important milestone in our long journey of building a democratic society.

18. Yes, it will be 20 years of hard work to restore our human rights and reclaiming our human dignity – principles that were destroyed and undermined by colonialism and apartheid.

19. Over this period, we have seen the Ruling Party establishing the first House of Traditional Leaders in 1995 and subsequently promulgating the Provincial and Local Houses of Traditional Leaders Act, 2005 (Act No: 6 of 2005) whose purpose was to make a provision for the establishment of the local houses of traditional leaders within the three districts in the province.

20. As we speak today, Ehlanzeni, Nkangala and Gert Sibande have Local Houses of Traditional Leaders in place – structures that were established early in 2008.

21. I might as well add that we were the first Province in the country to establish such Houses in the Districts – a move that changed the entire structure and system of the institution of Traditional Leadership.

22. This new approach brought with it the election of Traditional Council members – elections which embodied the principles of democracy, fair representation and gender sensitivity.

23. As I pointed out in the State of the Province Address, before 1994, there were 57 Senior Traditional Leaders in Mpumalanga that were not properly recognised by the previous apartheid regime.

24. There are legitimate traditional leaders whose status was removed by the previous regime due to their resistance to forceful removal from their land and their participation in the fight for freedom.

25. Taking cue from national developments, on the 2nd of September 2011, I appointment a Provincial Committee on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims to address the challenges of those affected Traditional Leaders.

26. Today, the province enjoys a total of 61 Traditional Councils including the two Kings. We hope and trust that the Committee on Disputes and Claims will conclude its assignment soon so that this matter could be laid to rest.

27. To date, a lot of progress has been made, however, we are aware that much more still needs to be done.

Provision of Support to the House

28. Honourable Chairperson, for the institution of Traditional Leadership to reclaim its status and role within society, government is also expected to provide adequate support to the institution, particularly in the area of capacity building and institutional efficiency.

29. To this end, the Ruling Party has been, and still continues, to introduce a range of interventions to support Traditional Leaders at different stages of the evolution of this institution.

- We are strengthening the House of Traditional Leaders, making it to be the centre of development in all the areas of Traditional Leaders;
- We are appointing capable personnel to man the administrative affairs of the House of Traditional Leaders. For example, we have elevated the post of the Head of Administration in the House of Traditional Leaders to Chief Director.

This post has been duly filled. Efforts to also enhance administrative support especially at local house level are underway;

- We are also improving the conditions of Traditional Leaders and their subordinates. The Proclamation made by President Jacob Zuma on the determination of salaries and allowances of Traditional Leaders, Members of the House, both National and Provincial, we are pleased to announce that the salaries of Headmen and Headwomen will be increased from R2 000 per month to R6 740 per month with immediate effect.
- We are face-lifting the palaces of our two Kings. As we speak, the construction of the two palaces for our kings, King Makhosoke II and King Mabhoko III has already started.
- In addition, we have also taken a decision not to renovate Traditional Council offices but rather to build new offices all together. In the 2014/15 financial year we will be building four (4) new Traditional Councils offices.

30. Honourable Chairperson and Members of the House, parallel to the process of rebuilding the institution of Traditional Leadership, we have also prioritised few areas of work that will contribute meaningfully towards the reduction of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

Job creation

31. Honourable Chairperson, over the past years of democracy, we have seen the Provincial Government working very closely with the House of Traditional Leaders, trying to find better mechanisms to address the high level of unemployment – a phenomenon which is predominantly in their areas of jurisdictions.

32. Together, we took a sectoral approach as one of the ways to address the challenge of unemployment.

33. We agreed to set the process in motion by prioritising the mining sector.

34. Together with the Minister of Mineral Resources we agreed:

- That Traditional Leaders must be consulted about any mining activities planned in their area of jurisdiction;
- That local people must be given first preference of employment opportunities brought along by the mining operations, particularly the employment of Young people;
- That a model to benefit Traditional Leaders where mining activities are taking place be investigated;
- That the Minister to map out mineral deposits in areas of jurisdiction of Traditional Leaders. This information will assist all the stakeholders involved to plan much better going forward.

35. Honourable Chairperson, all these critical issues are being given attention by the different stakeholders and are at different levels of progress.

36. We hope to strengthen our communication lines going forward so that all of us can remain in the loop about new developments taking place around these important issues.

37. Honourable Chairperson, we have also seen government collaborating more with the House on public works activities over the period under review, particularly in rural areas.

38. The roll out of the Expanded Public Works and Community Works Programmes are the case in point.

Rural development through agrarian reform

39. The Comprehensive Rural Development Programme is another area where we agreed to collaborate between government and the House.

40. Over the period under review, through the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), we have been able to address the issues of food security and improving the quality of life in the eight identified municipalities.

41. Indeed, through this programme, many of our communities are now able to have food on their tables.

42. Of course, through this programme, many of our previously disadvantaged have managed to gain access to land for farming and other economic activities.

43. Without doubt, through this programme, we have created 78 278 work opportunities for our people living in rural areas, particularly for the young people.

44. We also utilised the programme of 'Masibuyele Emasimini and Masibuyele esibayeni' to opportunities for aspiring small scale farmers and cooperatives.

45. As I pointed out in many occasions, these programmes that I have just highlighted are definitely yielding positive results as far as rural development is concerned.

46. Let me once again, appreciate the involvement of Traditional Leaders in these Programme. Indeed, working together we can do more.

47. I am aware that there have been some concerns raised in some areas about the availability and misuse of some of the equipment and livestock delivered by these programmes.

48. Let me assure you, we are already addressing this matter. Through your cooperation and monitoring work, I believe that we will succeed to minimise or uproot this cancer which working against growth and development of our people, particularly the rural poor.

Education

49. Honourable Chairperson, transforming our education system had seemed to be an impossible task to accomplish.

50. Through our collective efforts, we have changed the odds. Our hard work is definitely beginning to yield positive results.

51. Without doubt, we have laid a solid foundation for a better education system for future generations to come.

52. The significant improvement of the matric pass rate over the past five years bears testimony to this effect.

53. Last year when I opened the House of Traditional Leaders, I requested that, as custodians of social values, Members of the House must play a meaningful in matters of education.

54. Reports are showing that most Members did heed to this call and I, therefore, wish to take this opportunity to thank all those Traditional Leaders who really responding to this clarion call.

55. Today we can all be proud of this good progress. We need to tighten our grip even more going forward.

56. Through our comprehensive support to learners from poor households, we have created an education system that allows every child to dream of a better future.

Health

57. Honourable Chairperson, as a province we continue to strive for our goal of ensuring a long and healthy life for all.

58. Together with the House, we agreed to collaborate in the fight against the pandemic of HIV and AIDs, TB and Obesity.

59. To this end, our efforts in the fight against HIV and AIDS are quite a mixed bag. Certain areas of our Province show a decline, while other areas indicate an increase in prevalent and incidence cases.

60. Overall, we are not doing well in this area of work. The mountain that we are climbing is still steep.

61. Despite this unfavourable situation, allow me, Honourable Chairperson to commend our Traditional Leaders for the positive response to our call for intensifying male circumcision. We have done reasonable progress although failing to reach our set target.

62. Honourable Chairperson, diseases such as TB, Diabetes and High Blood pressure continue to be a serious threat to our people.

63. I therefore wish to appeal to all our Traditional Leaders to join government in its Awareness Campaign of encouraging our people to begin to live healthy lifestyles and also eat healthy food, including exercising more. I assume that, as leaders, we will lead by example.

64. We must also appreciate that Traditional leaders in Mpumalanga are now playing a very critical role in the rendering of health services in the province.

65. The interaction between the Executive Committee of the House and the MEC for Health and Welfare has resulted in the appointment of Amakhosi to be Board members in various hospitals in the province. This move will see Amakhosi playing a critical role in ensuring that good health services are rendered to their communities.

66. I am also pleased that Amakhosi are also important stakeholders in the Mpumalanga Provincial Aids Council. I would like see Members of the House playing an active role.

Fight Against Crime

67. Honourable Chairperson, as I indicated in the State of the Province Address, we have a good story about our performance regarding the reduction of crime in the Province.

68. Our recent crime statistics are painting a good picture.

69. The role that is played by our Traditional Leaders in this area of work is highly appreciated. I am informed that you have forged a good working relationship with the Department of Correctional Services.

70. I am pleased that this relationship will see you playing an active role in the parole boards. This will ensure that people are not released into our communities without a proper monitoring system.

71. Once again, let us all continue to work together towards fighting crime wherever it rears its ugly head.

Local Government

72. Honourable Chairperson, the good working relations that my administration is enjoyed with the institution of Traditional Leaders and the House of Traditional Leaders over the past five years is highly appreciated.

73. Working together we have been able to implement the programmes of government successfully. Many of our communities today have access to water, electricity and decent sanitation.

74. Your support in our endeavours to implement Section 81 of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act, 1998 is again appreciated. Although there were some challenges in the initial stages of the implementation process of this Act, significant strides were made in this regard.

Partnerships with other Organs of State

75. Honourable Chairperson, one is also encouraged by the commitment shown by the Executive of the House of Traditional Leaders in tackling issues that affect communities in your areas of jurisdiction.

76. The House of Traditional Leaders recently broke new grounds by forging working relations with the Commission on Gender Equality.

77. The two institutions signed an MOU that will guide the working relationship of these two parties on issues of gender equality. This move will alleviate the negative perceptions held by many people that the institution of Traditional Leadership does not observe gender equality or is oppressive to women.

78. Honourable Chairperson, we are fast approaching the period in which our young boys will attend ingoma. Last year we experienced an unfortunate incident where a high number of these boys never came back home.

79. Therefore, it will be incumbent upon all of us to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

80. All our efforts should be channelled towards preventing the repeat of this incident. The House has been directed to work closely with the Department of Health by developing stringent measures to avoid a repeat of this unfortunate incident.

81. Fortunately, we have already finalized the Ingoma Bill. We are currently rolling out consultations on the regulations of the bill. We urge all Traditional Leaders to participate on the consultations.

82. One would like to thank all the stakeholders who participated on the Ingoma Forum. All these stakeholders worked tirelessly in an effort to reduce further fatalities during the Ingoma rite of passage.

Disputes within Royal Families

83. Honourable Chairperson, disputes within royal families are still a great challenge facing the institution of Traditional Leadership in the province.

84. These disputes range from successions to ordinary royal family disputes and they are a cause for serious concern to government since they destabilise the effective functioning of Traditional Councils.

85. We have noted with great concern the involvement of some community members in royal family disputes – something that we want to totally discourage.

86. Matters of royal families must be dealt with by the inner royal family (Lusendvo). Communities under Traditional Leadership must learn to respect their Chieftaincy and desist from interfering or trying to influence decisions of royal families especially on issues of succession.

87. In an effort to address the succession disputes, the House has embarked on the programme of compiling the family tree, that is, genealogy of the various chieftaincies prioritising those with vacancies.

88. The Executive Committee of the House has also started a programme of visiting individual Amakhosi to discuss with them about the challenge of royal family disputes especially those related to succession.

89. We therefore wish to appeal to all Amakhosi and their royal families especially where there are outstanding disputes to bury their differences and put their efforts together in restoring peace and harmony within their respective chieftaincies.

It is upon you bo-Ndabezitha and your families to protect this institution and restore its dignity.

90. We are also pleased with the work that is being done by the Provincial Committee on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims. Of the 163 cases that were reported to the Committee, 90 cases have been dealt with. Of these, only two cases have been found to be valid so far.

91. Let me take this opportunity to salute the outgoing Chairperson of the committee, Mr Tsietsi Tolo, who will be joining the North West Province later.

92. We take a bow for him in absentia for his sterling leadership since the establishment of the committee.

93. We also congratulate his successor, Advocate Simon Mahlangu and wish him well in his new role as the Provincial Chairperson of the Committee with the hope that he will take over the baton from Mr Tolo and finish the daunting task that is still lying ahead of the committee.

Land use management

94. Honourable Chairperson, illegal occupation of land in areas under traditional leadership still remains a challenge. We highly appreciate the initiative taken by the Provincial House to tackle this challenge head on.

95. We have noted with great appreciations the initiative of the Executive Committee to establish a Stakeholders Forum to address the issue of illegal occupation of land in areas under traditional leadership.

96. The forum includes stakeholders like SALGA Mpumalanga, SAPS, Department of Human Settlements, Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Rural Administration and the Municipalities.

97. I am pleased to announce that last night the MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, the Chairperson of Salga , the Provincial Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, and the Commissioner of the Police in the province, have signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on land use management.

98. The MOU seeks to achieve better co-operation between Traditional Leaders and municipalities on land use management and spatial planning related issues.

99. This will ensure a more effective and efficient land use management system and common vision for the spatial development of municipalities.

100. Land ownership remains a thorny issue in the country and the situation is likely to continue until this matter is addressed adequately. The ANC-led government, under the leadership of President Zuma is tackling this issue head on.

101. Under his leadership, Parliament has just passed the bill for land redistribution. This bill will once again open an opportunity for the dispossessed to claim back land that was wrongfully taken from them.

102. During the opening of the National House of Traditional Leaders, President Zuma appealed to all of us, especially in the tribal areas, to take advantage of this opportunity, by submitting applications.

103. We have until March 2018 to claim back our land. We appeal to legal practitioners, Amakhosi and the professionals in our communities to assist our people in this exercise.

Conclusion

104. Honourable Chairperson, as I conclude, I indicated during the State of the Province Address (SOPA), that it was my last address in this current administration. This address is also my last one to the Mpumalanga House of Traditional Leaders.

105. It has indeed been a long, interesting and challenging journey.

106. Again, I must thank my organisation, The African National Congress for giving me the opportunity to lead this province for the past five years.

107. I also wish to thank the Mpumalanga House of Traditional Leaders, all Traditional Leaders and the people of Mpumalanga for working with me during this term of administration.

108. Let me emphasise again that on the 7th of May 2014, the country will be holding its National and Provincial elections. Let us all go and exercise our right to vote and choose the government which must lead us in the coming term.

109. Go out there and encourage your subjects to go and defend this democracy.

110. I wish the house well in its endeavours.

111. I now have the pleasure to declare the Mpumalanga Provincial House of Traditional Leaders officially opened.

112. **I thank you.**