

MEC SPD SKHOSANA Speakers Notes at Mpumalanga House Of Traditional Leaders Gala Dinner for the Opening of the House of Traditional Leaders at the Mpumalanga Legislature; Mbombela Stadium, 21 March 2013

Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, Kgosi Mokoena

Deputy Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, Inkhosi Ngomane and the entire Executive Committee

Members of the Executive Council

Honourable Deputy Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature

Honourable Members of Parliament

Honourable Mayors, Councillors and the Leadership of SALGA

Our esteemed Traditional Leaders

Representatives from the Houses of Traditional Leaders in the different provinces

The Head of the Department of CoGTA, Mr David Mahlobo

Distinguished guests and all dignitaries present

Ladies and gentlemen

1. This gala dinner is held on a very important day, the National Human Rights Day. This day is very important as it enables to us to reflect on our past and to always remember who we are and where we come from. The lesson learnt enables us to build a better future.

As we celebrate this day, we must commit ourselves never to go back to the pain and suffering that we experienced.

2. Programme Director; let me take this opportunity to thank the House of Traditional Leaders for inviting me here today and giving me this opportunity to share a few words with you.

I have barely been in the office for a month but I have had an opportunity to attend two very important functions of Traditional Leaders, which were the Inkhosi Mahlobo and Inkhosi Yende inaugurations.

Though I am still new in this portfolio but I must indicate that I have been very warmly welcomed by yourselves.

3. I will in due course be embarking on a programme of visiting you all to interact with you in your areas. As soon as we have finalised the programme I will communicate with you. The aim of these visits will be to engage with you on matters of strengthening our working relations as well looking at programmes that can bring about development in your areas.
4. Today's gala dinner is not meant to be one of speeches; however I just want to share a few thoughts with you. The Premier will elaborate on governments programme of action, when he opens the house tomorrow and gives us the marching orders.
5. This government under the Leadership of President Jacob Zuma nationally and Premier DD Mabuza values the relationship it has with traditional Leaders. We will continue to work closely with the institution of Traditional Leaders and we cherish your role in matters of governance. We also value the important role that you have played in improving the quality of education, improving health, and fighting crime and corruption. These are matters that affect our communities in their day to day lives. They are also part of the five priorities of the African National Congress led government.

I am proud to say that we have seen our Amakhosi rising to the challenge in dealing with these issues but there is still much more that needs to be done.

6. This year marks 100 years since the promulgation of the Land Act of 1913, which stripped the majority of our people of their land and made them trespassers in their land of birth. This Act was an abrogation of human rights and one of the pillars of apartheid because it reserved 87% of South Africa's land exclusively for white minority ownership.

It not only dispossessed many black South Africans of the land they owned, but also sought to prohibit black people from ever acquiring land in so-called "white" South Africa. The ultimate aim of the National Party government was to strip black South Africans of their citizenship. This Act, and its successor, the 1936 Land Act, are a major cause of unemployment and inequality in South Africa today.

7. Whilst significant progress has been made in addressing the imbalances that were created the Land Act of 1913, through processes such as the land restitution, land reform and land tenure. There is still a lot that needs to be done. Some of the scars created by this Act will live with us for a longtime to come. The people were not only deprived of the land but they were also deprived of the skills to tilt the land.

Some the people who have received the land have not utilized it optimally; rather they have been characterized by infighting and self enrichment.

What good will the land do if we are not utilizing it optimally and we are not addressing the issues of food security? We call upon our Traditional Leaders to take a lead in encouraging rural communities to utilize the land optimally. Government programmes such as Masibuyele Emasimini, Asibuyele Esibayeni, and the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme are available to assist rural communities.

8. We are all aware that the Traditional Courts Bill was introduced to parliament in March 2008. In May 2008 the Justice Portfolio Committee called for submissions concerning the Bill and held public hearings. During these public hearings organizations representing traditional leaders supported the Bill. However, organized labour, the Council of Churches, the Commission for Gender Equality and various civil society organizations as well as organizations representing rural women and various rural communities opposed it. The ANC government is a government that listens to the views of its constituencies and stakeholders.

The Bill was withdrawn after the hearings, partly because of opposition, but also because there was not time to complete the legislative procedures required by section 76 of the Constitution. We appeal to Traditional Leaders not to despair on the legislative processes underway. This is democracy at work.

9. Programme Director, Last year we observed a very disturbing incidence when our headmen took to the streets to raise their concerns. This is alien to the institution of traditional leadership.

We know that headmen/headwomen are appointed by Senior Traditional Leaders and we expect them to raise concerns with their respective Senior Traditional. The traditional leaders will take the concerns to their respective Local House which will then alleviate the matter to the Provincial House. Senior Traditional Leaders are expected to ensure that there is a healthy working relationship and communication between themselves, their headmen/headwomen and traditional councils. I want to urge our Traditional Leaders and Headman to guard against those wolves masquerading as sheep and come to mislead and use them for their own selfish ends.

These people do not care about you. We have dealt with a number of the concerns that were raised by the headmen and the Premier will elaborate on these tomorrow.

10. It's been 18 months since the Provincial Committee on Traditional Leadership Dispute and Claims assumed duty on 2 September 2011. It has concluded investigations and recommendations into 29 claims and disputes of traditional leadership. As I indicated earlier on I have attended two inaugurations which have been a result of the good work of the Committee. The Mahlobo and Yende traditional communities were successfully restored and they are now recognized as Senior Traditional leaders. Siyanibongela bo Ndabezitha Inkhosi Mahlobo ne Inkhosi yaka Yende.

We are the first province to have successfully restored Traditional Leaders through the processes of the Provincial Claims and Disputes in the country. It's a feat that has not been accomplished by any of its other five (5) counter-part provincial committees.

11. Programme Director, this year also promises to be a very exciting year for our Traditional Leaders. The 5-year term of office of the current traditional councils comes to an end on 31 April 2013. We have embarked on a process of drafting of regulations for election of new traditional councils members as provided for in the legislation. The houses of traditional leaders will in due course be consulted for their inputs in this regard. We have learnt a lot of lessons from the term of traditional councils that will be ending. We will be taking these lessons and using them to assist the process going forward. As we embark on this process we must realize the important role that these traditional councils must play in our communities.

12. Also in the 2013/14 financial year, we are looking forward to taking forward the resolutions that emanated from the stakeholder engagements we had between Traditional Leadership, councilors, Community development Workers and Ward Committees, last year. We remember that there was a broad consensus amongst others on the following issues;

- The need for integrated planning on land use management systems;
- All parties to collaborate in combating land invasion;
- Mutual respect amongst all stakeholders working in the same space, which is a ward;
- Clear definition of roles and functions of stakeholders, with a clear understanding that a CDW cannot convene a community meeting without the knowledge of a Ward Councillor and a Traditional Leader.

13. The working relations and co-operation between Traditional Leaders and municipalities cannot be over emphasized. If we cannot work in harmony we will encounter challenges that will impact negatively on all of us. A good example is the challenges regarding the widespread proliferation of unplanned human settlements and related matters on communal or traditional land that are impacting negatively on municipalities' service delivery; development planning; spatial development frameworks; and land use planning schemes.

14. We are all aware that there are different roles and functions conferred by legislation relating to land development planning and administrative function between municipalities and traditional leaders respectively as the organs of state.

There is a need to foster cooperation between these organs for developmental needs of local communities, a framework for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) seeking to facilitate the synergy thereby allowing the complementary roles has been proposed by the Department. We will be embarking on a process shortly of getting municipalities and Traditional Leader to sign this MOU.

15. In conclusion, let me once again thank you for giving me this opportunity to share these few thoughts with you. I trust that this is the first of many engagements that I will be having with you. Let me once again reiterate my earlier comments that I am looking forward to working and learning a lot from you.

16. I thank you.