

Honourable Premier DD Mabuza address the opening of the House of Traditional Leaders at the Mpumalanga Legislature, 9 March 2012

Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, Ikosi uMahlangu

Deputy Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, Kgosigadi Mohlala

Members of the Executive Council

Honourable Members of the Mpumalanga Legislature

Honourable Members of Parliament

Honourable Mayors, Councillors and the Leadership of SALGA

His Excellency King Makhosonkhe II of aManala

Our esteemed Traditional Leaders

Representatives from the Houses of Traditional Leaders in the different provinces

The Director General of the Province and Heads of Departments

Distinguished guests and all dignitaries present

Compatriots and friends

Ladies and gentlemen

Honourable Chairperson of the House, I wish to start off by paying my last respect to the late Ikosi NJ Mahlangu of the Fene Traditional Council who was laid to rest last year.

I wish also to pay my last respect to Inkhosi JM Nkosi of the Bhevula Traditional Council who will be laid to rest over this weekend.

On behalf of the people of this province I wish to convey our deepest condolences to their royal families and their communities. May their souls rest in peace.

Honourable Chairperson, in my State of the Province Address delivered last week Friday, I concluded it with a citation.

It was the words of wisdom extracted from the ANC January 8 statement delivered by President Zuma. The extract goes as follows:

“not only we celebrate a glorious history of selfless struggle by millions of ordinary South Africans who defeated the apartheid regime, but most importantly, we summon the new courage and energy to face the future with confidence. This is the right moment to pause and ponder the future of South Africa..... over the next 100 years.

During this year 2012, our nation must renew our determination to build a South Africa founded on the principles of the freedom charter and our democratic constitution. We must bring new energy and new ideas into the kind of society we want to build over the next few decades.”

Indeed, all of us, must bring new energy and new ideas into the kind of society we want to build over the next few decades.

As we all know, this ideal society that President Zuma is making reference to is a society that was conceptualised by the founding fathers of the African National Congress in 1912, among whom, were the Traditional Leaders.

Our Traditional Leaders were in the forefront of the struggles that were waged to ensure that South Africa, in the distant future, become this envisaged society as conceptualised.

Undoubtedly, our Traditional Leaders played a pivotal role during the Wars of Dispossession against colonialism and apartheid.

And when we talk about the history of the liberation struggle, we start with the Wars of Dispossession where the likes of Sekhukhune, Hintsa and Bambata, among other chiefs, fought against colonialists to the end.

Tribal divisions were our only weakness during Wars of Dispossession.

Only after we were defeated in the wars, did we speak of unity, with the last Wars of Dispossession fought by Chief Bambata in 1906.

Of course, together with the Chiefs, the ANC succeeded to depose the draconian system of apartheid and ushered in freedom, democracy and liberty.

It is indeed befitting that we must pay homage to the role that was played by Traditional Leaders back then and the role that they still play today in ensuring that we do improve the lives of our people. We will continue to work with your Majesties towards achieving these goals.

Honourable Chairperson of the House, unfortunately, the new era of democracy came along with its new challenges which, if not tackled head on, have the potential to sway us off from our broad strategic goal of creating this new society that we are all yearning for – a society that is united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous.

It is common knowledge by now that the challenges that are standing in our way towards the envisaged society are the high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequalities, including the HIV and AIDs pandemic.

Of great concern is that these challenges are predominantly pervasive in the areas that 'Amakhosi' lead and captain.

Over the past seventeen years (17), we, as a collective, have been working very hard to ease this burden off the shoulders of our people, with minimum success of course.

Therefore, I believe that the words of encouragement from President Zuma came at an opportune time, particularly when he said that we must bring new energy and new ideas into the kind of society we want to build over the next few decades.

As we conquered the demon of apartheid, I am convinced that, applying the same zeal, we can, as a collective defeat poverty and unemployment, and most importantly, reduce the level of inequalities drastically in your areas of jurisdiction.

Of course, our combined efforts can bring the new incidents of HIV and AIDs to zero level. We can break the vicious cycle of this dreadful disease and begin to create a society that is free from this deadly virus.

And this can only be possible if we, indeed, bring new energy and new ideas into the kind of society we want to build over the next few decades.

Our previous Manifestos, including the current one, are the necessary stepping stones towards the realisation of our vision and mission.

Therefore, Honourable Chairperson of the House, the role of Traditional Leaders in the programmes that government has initiated to pursue its Manifesto priorities cannot be overemphasised.

Last year when I appeared before this House, I made a number of commitments that sought to address the challenges that are faced by our communities.

I am glad to confirm that a number of strides have been made in implementing a number of the programmes that government pronounced and the type of support that will be provided to Traditional Leaders.

I am pleased to report that the province has spent more than **R20m** in purchasing vehicles for Amakhosi. I believe that the task of Amakhosi in discharging their responsibilities has been made much easier now.

We are also providing support to Amakhosi to strengthen the administration of their affairs.

Currently all the traditional councils are supported by a team from the department through training on financial management to the staff of traditional councils. This program will be rolled out for the period of two years.

Since the implementation of this program, there has been an improvement in the management of finances in Traditional Councils.

In restoring the dignity of Amakhosi, we have continued to improve the state of Amakhosi office.

Four traditional council offices were renovated during the current financial year. We are aware that a lot still needs to be done, however, we are hampered by the limited budget.

We are also looking closely on working with all our district municipalities to house the Local House of Traditional Leaders.

The positive response that we have received from the districts is quite encouraging. We hope to conclude this matter very soon.

Provincial Committee on Disputes and Claims

Honourable Chairperson of the House, progress has also been made on Traditional Leadership disputes.

We are pleased to announce that we have already established a Provincial Committee that will be dealing with these matters and also are proud that our Provincial Chairperson is also the National Chairperson of the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims.

On behalf of the people of this province I wish to congratulate Mr BJ Tolo on his appointment and wish him and his team well.

We are aware that there are a substantial number of unresolved disputes and claims on senior traditional leadership in the province.

There are 124 cases on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims to be dealt with over the next four years. The team has been hard at work and I am waiting the final report on the 21 cases already dealt with.

We wish to once more appeal to all our communities to co-operate with the process and respect its outcome whether it favours you or not.

As a province, we believe that royal families are better placed to assist in resolving most of these disputes.

We are, therefore, calling upon everyone to give support to this Committee, particularly the institution of traditional leadership.

Creating an inclusive economy

Honourable Chairperson of the House, as a pointed out earlier, 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.

In the recent State of the Province Address, government was quite elaborate about its approach towards tackling the three related ills that continue to engulf our people.

Among other things:

- Government asserted that infrastructure development remain a key lever for creating jobs *en masse*.
- We argued that, for us to bring our people into the fold of the mainstream economy, we have to place cooperatives and small business development high on our economic transformation agenda.
- We also impressed on the need to pay special attention on the agricultural sector because it has the potential to create jobs for people living in rural areas and consequently change their lives for the better.

Now, in all these areas that I have just highlighted, the role of our Traditional Leaders is extremely immense.

The CRPD sites

If I have to give an example, in the areas under your jurisdiction, we have, among others:

- A programme of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to support job creation and skills development;
- We are also rolling out the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) which focuses on the provision of basic services, agrarian and land reform;
- There is also Masibuyele Emasimini whose primary focus is on agrarian reform. Through this programme government is providing a package of support services rendered to small scale farmers involved in livestock and crop production.

In all these programmes and many others, we expect to see the Traditional Leaders collaborating with government right from governance issues to planning and implementation of projects, including the monitoring and evaluation thereof.

Together, we have to agree about the issues of priority in our communities and the land use plan that must guide development in this common space that we are all sharing.

We have to avoid the situation where there is disjuncture between the municipality and Traditional Leaders in the redistribution of land for development.

During the implementation of projects, we expect our Traditional Leaders to exercise some degree of oversight. You have to ensure that you have some knowledge about all the projects that are implemented within your areas because this will equip you better to exercise the oversight role.

Where projects require public mobilisation, Traditional Authorities must also be in the forefront because you are the ones who understand your terrain better.

However, it has been noted that participation of Traditional Leaders in the IDP processes is improving and these IDP issues are, more interestingly, begin to cascade down to izimbizo where municipal councillors are engaging with communities to discuss issues of development.

It appears that the workshop that was conducted during the financial year of 2011/12 on IDP for traditional councils in the District Municipalities is now bearing fruits.

Already, there is a steady increase in the participation of traditional councils in Ward Committees.

I would, once again, like to emphasise the importance of the participation of Traditional Leaders in matters of municipalities.

As government we continue to cherish the role played by our Amakhosi in the struggle against oppression, poverty and underdevelopment.

We are encouraged that our traditional leaders are participating in the municipal councils except in Nkangala region.

We hope this matter will be given the necessary attention that it deserves as a matter of urgency.

The programmes 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.

Education

Honourable Chairperson of the House, our Traditional Leaders have also a critical role to play in matters of education.

For effective teaching and learning to take place, our teachers must be in class during working hours teaching and so must our children, but in their case learning.

Our learners must be protected from drug abuse and other unbecoming tendencies.

They must be taught respect at all levels – be at home, school, church, basically everywhere.

Therefore, it is also incumbent upon our Traditional Leaders to utilise institutions of Traditional Authorities to advocate and complement the good intentions of government.

We expect to see Traditional Authorities quite visible in School Governing bodies and other support programmes dedicated to learners.

We expect to see Traditional Authorities working together with government and other stakeholders towards inculcating the culture of teaching and learning.

Yes, we expect to see Traditional Authorities, through its communication mechanisms, urging parents to take charge of the education of their children.

When we say there should be no child roaming the streets during school hours, let it be so without any excuse.

Let us go back to our roots and make the dictum *'Your Child Is My Child'* a reality.

Together, let us educate the nation. It is our only way to advance closer towards our ideal society.

Health

Honourable Chairperson of the House, like in education matters, we also see the participation of Traditional Authorities in health issues to be of paramount importance.

Currently, Mpumalanga Province is under serious threat of, *inter alia*, the HIV and AIDs pandemic, TB and obesity. According to the information at our disposal, these are among the top ten killer diseases in the Province and the country as a whole.

Top on this list is the HIV and AIDs pandemic.

Over the past years or so, we introduced an array of interventions to curb the prevalence and new incidence cases of this pandemic. Our efforts seem not to be yielding the desired outcome. The success rate is very minimal.

As we speak, while we observe some degree of stability in certain parts of the Province, however, Ehlanzeni and Gert Sibande districts are showing an upward trend of new incidence cases.

This is not a good sign at all.

If something drastic is not undertaken as a matter of urgency, it will be as good as kissing our envisaged future goodbye, especially when taking into account that the majority of the victims are the young people – our future leaders.

This situation has to be rolled-back, otherwise our future, as a nation, is doomed.

Honourable Chairperson of the House, without doubt, this is a tall order.

But, if we bring new energy and new ideas to the fore, we can beat this pandemic.

Taking the **'Male Circumcision Campaign'** that government has initiated recently, as an example, together with the Traditional Authorities, we can place this disease on a serious retreat.

Combining this campaign and the cultural practice of circumcision, found in some of the Traditional Authorities, we can make a huge dent on this pandemic.

We are, therefore, appealing to the House to explore innovative ways to expand the intake of males that must be subjected to this cultural practice. It is one of the lifelines, let us utilise it optimally.

Let us mobilise our communities to take HIV and AIDs tests so that they know their status. The sooner the better because medical intervention could be timeously and more lives could be saved.

Crime and Corruption

Honourable Chairperson of the House, crime continues to be a thorn in the flesh of many communities falling under the jurisdiction of Traditional Authorities.

As we all know, crime is undermining peace and stability of communities, including growth and development.

As leaders in your own right, your participation in programmes aimed at fighting crime wherever it raises its ugly heads, is highly welcomed.

Traditional Authorities must participate meaningfully in all institutions meant to deal with the problems of crime – institutions such as the ‘Community Policing Fora’ and other related community-based.

Traditional Leaders must utilise the communication platforms at their disposal to enhance mobilisation of communities to join hands with all of us in our quest of creating a crime-free society. This is possible. It is happening in other parts of the world – places like OMAN for instance.

Let us strengthen our relationship with all the state agencies that are assignment with the responsibility of uprooting crime from our communities.

Recently, there is a disturbing phenomenon that is emerging from reported cases of abuse and rape.

We are told that there is an escalation of these cases being withdrawn after few days of being reported to the police.

This is a serious concern. It is an exercise that not only defeats the ends of justice but also undermines the core principles upon which our envisaged society must be built on.

Therefore, we need to work together to ensure that the rights of the weak and vulnerable individuals in our communities are protected at all times.

The areas that one has alluded to, in the State of the Province Address as '**crime hot-spots**', require our undivided attention. We have to work very closely with the South African Police Service to make our communities feel safe.

Similarly to issues of **corruption**, let us deepen our working relationship with government, NGOs and police, including our communities in our fight against this unbecoming behaviour.

As a Province, we have an Anti-Corruption Strategy in place.

Therefore, we expect to see Traditional Authorities getting heavily involved in the implementation processes of this strategy.

Together, we can turn the tide around because corruption is a cancer. It has the potential to reverse our gains and place our moral value system on the wane.

Nation building

Talking of the moral value system, the nation that we are in the process of building, we all urge, must be founded on a moral value system that holds respect of human dignity in high esteem.

It must be a nation that respects human rights and freedom of choice or association by individuals.

The concept of 'Ubuntu' is of the fundamental tenets that, to a large extent, define our identity as a people living in this part of the globe.

It is a concept that could be traced back in all our different cultures, traditions and customs.

In essence, it is a concept that is underpinning our social fabric as South Africans.

Fortunately, Traditional Leaders, throughout history, have been, and still are viewed as custodian and pioneers of these critical principles that characterise us as a people.

Therefore, we need to capitalise on this strength as we pursue our broad strategic objective of building a new nation that is coherent and cohesive.

The celebration of our different cultures in the spirit of nation building must be enhanced and encouraged.

We expect to see the Traditional Authorities enhancing their involvement in the celebration of our designated national holidays.

We have to see provincial celebrations that are representatives of the demographics in the Province because, as things stand presently, we are not faring very well in this area of work.

In the State of the Province, government committed to establish a 'Creative industry Super Hub' – centre that will be utilised to conserve and promote our diverse cultures.

Obviously, the role of the Traditional Authorities in this cultural Hub cannot be overemphasised.

Therefore, let us take an advantage of this window of opportunity to promote our diverse cultures.

Conclusion

Honourable Chairperson of the House, as I conclude, I wish to challenge all the Traditional Authorities to put together clear programmes that must talk to the issues that I have raised as areas of collaboration and partnership.

Government is prepared to provide support to the House of Traditional Leaders beyond what is applicable now. However, such support must be guided by clear programmes, as I have pointed out already.

As the Premier, I wish to interact more with the House and Executive Mayors on issues of common interests. We need to have a structured way to process issues that affect our common developmental agenda.

The modalities of the structured interaction will be communicated to the House in due course.

Let me emphasise that together we can do more to build sustainable communities based on the principle of unity in diversity.

I am aware that the term of this House is coming to an end.

I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to thank the current leadership and Traditional Leaders for the good work done during your term.

We had a wonderful journey.

As a person, I have learned a lot. You have empowered me on understanding the intricacies of traditional leadership institutions, its operations and ethos.

And I would love to express our profound pleasure for contributing towards harnessing the relationship between government and the traditional leadership.

We appeal to Amakhosi who will be taking over the baton of leadership at local and provincial houses to run at a winning speed.

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

Having said that, let me take this opportunity to wish the house well in its challenging work.

I declare the sitting of the Mpumalanga Provincial House of Traditional Leaders open.

I thank You