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**SPEECH BY THE PREMIER OF MPUMALANGA PROVINCE,
MR MANDLA PADNEY NDLOVU, (MPL), ON THE OCCASION OF THE
OPENING OF THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL HOUSE OF
TRADITIONAL AND KHOI-SAN LEADERS 06 MAY 2026, AT THE
PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE, MBOMBELA, AT 10h00**

Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership who is also the President of CONTRALESA, **Kgoši Mokoena**,
Deputy Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership, **Inkosi Yende**,

Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons of the Local Houses of Traditional and Khoi-San leaders,

Honourable Member of the Executive Committee for COGHSTA, **MEC Mashilo**,

Members of the Executive Committee present here today,

Members of the Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership,
Honourable Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature, **Ms Masilela**,

Honourable Deputy Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature, **Mr Masango**,

Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature,

Esteemed Amakhosi/Magoši, Izinduna, Traditional Leaders and Khoi-San Representatives,

Director-General of the Mpumalanga Province, **Ms Skosana**,

Acting Superintendent-General of the COGHSTA Department, **Mr Ngubane**,

Heads of Departments, and all Senior Managers present here today,

Leaders of Religious and Cultural Formations,
Representatives from Traditional Healers,
Representatives from the Political Parties,
Distinguished Guests, families and friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning, Lotjani, Sanibonani Avuxeni

1. As we gather today in this sacred space, we do so not as people without memory, but as a nation shaped by history, sacrifice and endurance.
2. Programme Director, Traditional leadership was never abolished by colonisers, or apartheid instead it was wounded, marginalised and distorted but it survived because of strong royal leadership which were supported by the people and it is rooted in African worldview.
3. As OR Tambo once wisely observed: **“A leader must always remember that the people must be carried along. Leadership divorced from the people is leadership destined to fail.”**

4. We walk into this House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders carrying the legacy of those who walked before us, those who suffered so that we may stand upright today, and those whose blood, sweat and courage earned us the freedom we enjoy today.
5. We commemorate the lives of our forebears who fought tirelessly for the recognition and preservation of this institution, an institution where leaders are neither elected nor anointed, but are born into responsibility.
6. We honour the legacy of great figures such as King Sekhukhune, King Musi KaMahlangu, hosi Soshangane Nxumalo and king Zulu kaMalandela amongst many others, whose resilience and courage embodied the enduring strength and dignity of African leadership in the face of adversity.
7. For an African, these commemorations are not mere ceremonies. They are spiritual moments. They remind us that leadership is not about position, but about service; not about privilege, but about sacrifice; not about glory, but about responsibility.

8. Just a few days ago, on the **27th of April**, we celebrated **Freedom Day**, a day etched permanently into the soul of our nation.
9. It is the day South Africans of all races stood in demographically long queues, not merely to vote, but to reclaim dignity, humanity and the right to determine their own destiny.
10. Freedom Day reminds us that democracy was not given, it was hard fought and won. As Aristotle wisely observed, and later echoed by President OR Tambo, **“It is easier to fight for and win democracy than it is to preserve it.”**
11. Ours was built on the collective struggle of workers, peasants, traditional leaders, students, religious leaders and ordinary citizens who refused to accept permanent oppression.
12. This House, which we are officially opening today, is therefore not a ceremonial structure; it is the embodiment of the living relationship between the people and governance.

13. It is where tradition meets democracy, where heritage informs development, and where ancestral wisdom guides modern policy.
14. This House remains a cornerstone of governance in our province, playing a vital role in strengthening democratic participation and community development.
15. This position is firmly aligned with the national vision articulated by His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa, who has consistently affirmed the central role of traditional leadership in advancing participatory democracy and inclusive development in our country.
16. The Mpumalanga House of Traditional and KhoiSan Leaders exist to give a voice, dignity and institutional expression to leadership that predates colonial borders and apartheid administrations.
17. This House plays a critical advisory role in legislation, policy development and governance. It is a bridge between the government and communities. It is a custodian of culture, land, customs and moral values.

18. We reaffirm today that there can be no sustainable development in Mpumalanga without the active and meaningful participation of traditional leaders. Traditional institutions are indispensable partners in service delivery.
19. The Institution of Traditional Leadership remains a stabiliser of communities, and a partner in governance. It carries the wisdom of generations and ensures that development is not detached from identity.
20. This understanding has not only been affirmed in principle, but actively advanced through sustained collaboration between government and traditional authorities over the years.
21. Successive administrations have deliberately positioned traditional leaders at the centre of community development, whether through their involvement in local governance processes, land administration, the facilitation of development programmes, or the preservation of cultural practices.

22. We have, as a province, invested in strengthening the institutional capacity of traditional councils, improving coordination through the Mpumalanga House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, and ensuring that traditional leadership plays a meaningful advisory and participatory role in policy development.
23. These efforts have yielded measurable successes: improved community stability, enhanced dispute resolution mechanisms, stronger partnerships in service delivery initiatives, and increased social cohesion across rural communities.
24. As Government, we reaffirm that sustainable development in Mpumalanga cannot occur without the active participation of traditional leaders. You are the link between policy and the people.
25. We are advancing an Agrarian Revolution anchored in rural economies. This is not rhetoric, it is a deliberate strategy to transform communal land into productive economic assets. Traditional leaders are central to unlocking land for productive use. We must transition from subsistence to commercial-scale agricultural participation, ensuring:

- Food self-sufficiency at household and community levels
- Expansion of agro-processing and value chains
- Entry of rural producers into formal markets

26. Let us transform rural land into engines of economic growth and food security.

27. Government is implementing a targeted agricultural support programme aimed at preparing farmers within traditional authority areas for participation in the upcoming Mpumalanga International Food Market.

28. This development presents a strategic opportunity for rural producers to access formal markets, improve household incomes, and contribute meaningfully to food security and economic growth.

29. To ensure readiness, government will provide comprehensive support to farmers, including mechanisation services such as tractors and implements, as well as essential production inputs like seeds, seedlings, fertilizers, and agrochemicals.

30. In addition, farmers will receive technical advisory support to improve productivity, ensure compliance with market standards, and strengthen their competitiveness within structured value chains.

31. The success of this initiative is dependent on strong collaboration between government and Traditional Leaders. In this partnership, Traditional Leaders play a critical role in

facilitating access to communal land for agricultural production.

32. By making land available, communities will be able to expand cultivation and increase output. We will complement this by supplying mechanisation, inputs, and ongoing technical support.
33. This coordinated approach is intended to unlock underutilised communal land, promote efficient land use, and boost agricultural production in rural areas.
34. Ultimately, this will position communities within traditional authority areas to actively participate in supplying the Mpumalanga International Food Market and other formal markets.
35. Furthermore, the Masibuyele Esibayeni Programme provides an additional opportunity for strengthening livestock production in rural communities.
36. Traditional Leaders and their subjects are encouraged to mobilise their communities to apply for support across various livestock commodities in line with programme guidelines.
37. A key component of this programme is the Bull Scheme, which enables the provision of high- quality breeding bulls for use within communal grazing systems.

38. This intervention is expected to improve the genetic quality of livestock, enhance reproductive performance, and increase the market value of animals.
39. Over time, it will contribute to the sustainability and commercialisation of communal livestock farming. We remains committed to working in partnership with Traditional Leaders to advance agricultural development and rural economic transformation.
40. Through the combined efforts of land access facilitation and government support in the form of mechanisation, inputs, and livestock improvement programmes, communities will be better positioned to maximise production and benefit from emerging market opportunities.
41. Traditional Leaders are therefore urged to actively support these initiatives and encourage widespread participation among their communities to ensure inclusive growth and long-term sustainability.
42. I committed to donate a cow to each traditional authority, we have already started and we aim to finish and ensure that all traditional leaders receive their cows.
43. We shall also be installing boreholes in all our Traditional Council Offices, where there is enough fresh ground water not only as assurance for stable and reliable water supply but also as a supplement to the existing sources for irrigation for small scale fresh produce to sustain themselves.

44. During the 6th administration in 2024, we purchased vehicles for our traditional authorities. We then made a promise at Kwa-Mhlanga Government Complex in Nkangala, during our engagement with AmaKhosi, where we committed to acquire bakkies, one each for all Traditional Authorities in the Province.
45. These vehicles are intended to support small-scale farming initiatives and enable traditional authorities to participate meaningfully in mainstream markets. I am pleased to confirm that this commitment will be fulfilled within the current financial year.
46. Once this process is complete, all traditional authorities will be adequately equipped with vehicles, and government will no longer need to procure additional vehicles for this purpose.
47. Programme Director, we are committed to inclusive economic growth that leaves no community behind.
48. Traditional Councils must become hubs of local economic coordination, facilitating cooperatives, supporting SMMEs, encouraging youth entrepreneurship, and promoting women's participation in economic activity.
49. Our partnership with the University of Mpumalanga, aimed at facilitating up to 388 000 job opportunities during the MTDP period, will prioritise skills development within traditional communities.

50. Education remains non-negotiable. Improving learner performance, expanding bursary opportunities, and equipping young people with skills to create their own enterprises or be employable.
51. Crime, Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), substance abuse and moral decay cannot be defeated by police alone.
52. Traditional leaders are the first line of social cohesion, dispute resolution and moral authority. Their leadership is foundational to restoring dignity, accountability and respect in our communities.
53. We call upon Amakhosi and community leaders to intensify campaigns against violence and criminality, and to restore the moral fabric of our society.
54. Traditional leaders are better positioned to influence community behaviour, mediate disputes before they escalate into criminal acts, and mobilise communities against social ills such as gender-based violence, substance abuse, and youth delinquency. Their authority and proximity to the people make them indispensable actors in building safer communities.
55. To give practical effect to this collaboration, we are strengthening structured partnerships between traditional

councils, Community Policing Forums, and local law enforcement agencies.

56. This includes the rollout of joint community safety forums at traditional authority level, capacity-building programmes for Amakhosi and traditional councils on crime prevention, and the integration of traditional leadership into ward-based safety planning and early warning systems.

57. Furthermore, the Province will intensify coordinated outreach campaigns, led jointly by the government, traditional leaders, and civil society, to raise awareness, promote reporting of crime, and reinforce positive social values.

58. We welcome the establishment of newly elected Traditional Councils and emphasise the principles of ethical leadership, accountability and transparency.

59. As the government, we have responded to concerns regarding the appointment and remuneration of Headmen and Headwomen, streamlined processes, and addressed administrative bottlenecks.

60. We remain committed to continuous improvement, training, induction and capacity building of our traditional leaders in

partnership with the University of Mpumalanga and the Moral Regeneration Movement.

61. Programme Director, Dignity in leadership requires dignity in infrastructure. Over 30 new Traditional Council Offices have been constructed, while 25 others have been renovated, furnished and equipped with connectivity and security features.
62. We provided vehicles to all the royal leadership for operational efficiency. We equipped all offices with computers, mobile devices and data connectivity.
63. I am pleased to announce that five new Traditional Council offices in Matsamo, Amashangana, Mahlaphahlapha, Kwandwalaza, and Ogenyaneni are now fully constructed, furnished, and operational, creating suitable spaces for leadership, consultation, and community engagement.
64. Additionally, eight offices in Mpakeni, Msogwaba, Lugedlane, Nkambeni, Mdluli, Mjindi, Makhosoke II Kings Cluster, and Ndzudza Mabhoko have been renovated, further reinforcing our unwavering support for strong, visible, and respected traditional institution equipped with safety measures and digital connectivity that also benefit surrounding communities.

65. Looking ahead to 2026/27, our work continues with renewed urgency. We will construct additional Traditional Council offices in Lekgoetla, Kgarudi and eSandleni, while renovating the offices of Enikwakuyengwa and Ebutsini, and strengthening security and dignity through fencing, paving and a perimeter wall at identified sites, including the Office of King Makhosoke II.
66. Our vision is bold, clear, and non-negotiable, modern, functional, and dignified spaces for all our traditional leaders.
67. We refuse to accept a reality where those who carry the heritage and authority of our people are expected to lead from structures that are broken, unsafe, and unworthy of their status.
68. In Mpumalanga, no traditional leader shall ever serve under conditions that undermine their dignity or the respect their role commands.
69. We are restoring honour, we are building with purpose, and we are ensuring that the institutions of traditional leadership reflect the pride and strength of our people.
70. We are making progress in recognising traditional communities that have historically been marginalised, resolving succession disputes, and improving the welfare of traditional leaders.
71. Programme Director, the Province is in the advanced process of finalising the recognition of the Magwazidili traditional community, led by the Dladla family.

72. Following a thorough investigation conducted by the erstwhile Tolo Commission, it was confirmed that the chieftaincy historically existed, and a recommendation was made that this community, based in Amsterdam within the Mkhondo Local Municipality, be formally recognised, together with the appointment of its Senior Traditional Leader.
73. This process reflects our commitment to restoring dignity, history and legitimacy to traditional communities whose leadership was disrupted by the injustices of the past.
74. At the same time, we acknowledge that disputes within royal families remain one of the most significant challenges delaying the finalisation of succession matters.
75. However, the strengthened collaboration between the Office of the MEC for COGHSTA and the Executive Committee of the Mpumalanga Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders has yielded positive results, enabling the successful resolution of succession processes in Enikwakuyengwa, Kgarudi, Thabakgolo and Manala Makerana, with encouraging progress also made in the Mnisi Traditional Council.
76. Alongside these efforts, we remain committed to improving the welfare of traditional leaders through the implementation of the Handbook for Traditional Leaders.
77. This includes exploring the determination of full-time status for Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons of our three

Local Houses, reinforcing Mpumalanga's leadership role in advancing the conditions of traditional leadership nationally.

78. We will contribute R100 000 towards the burial of every recognised senior traditional leader and their spouse.
79. Hon. Members, cultural practices such as initiation must be protected, regulated and made safe. We are strengthening support for cultural and administrative functions as part of our commitment to preserving heritage while enhancing the effectiveness of traditional institutions.
80. Cultural gatherings such as Ummemo are not merely ceremonial occasions, they are vital platforms for unity, accountability and leadership.
81. They provide abo-Ndabezitha with an annual opportunity to report back to their communities on the work of Traditional Councils, to reflect on challenges, and to chart a collective way forward.
82. As the government continues to allocate grants to Traditional Councils, we appreciate that these resources carry clear conditions to ensure responsible use, transparency and improved service to communities, thereby reinforcing both cultural continuity and sound governance.
83. We engaged with the PICC to check our preparedness for the winter initiation schools. Our foremost priority is the safety of our children. It is our prayer and wish that our children leave their homes and come back to re-join their families alive. The initiation period for 2026:

- AmaNdebele: 15 May – 16 July
- Bapedi: 26 June – 31 July
- Bakone: 16 May – 07 September (out-of-school initiates)
- Amakhosa: 11 April – 10 June, it is only one initiate who is also not at school.

84. To enhance monitoring capacity and ensure water security, accessibility, and effective oversight, we have procured three district vehicles and leased an additional six, bringing the total number of vehicles to nine. In addition, 600 JoJo tanks have been distributed to initiation schools to ensure a reliable supply of water to safeguard the health and well-being of initiates.

85. Programme Director and Hon. Members, this House must champion unity in diversity. Through cultural programmes, dialogues and heritage preservation, we strengthen the social fabric of Mpumalanga.

86. The Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation remains steadfast in advancing social cohesion and nation-building as a central pillar of its 2026/27 programme of action.

87. Through intensified intercultural initiatives, ranging from flagship cultural events and community dialogues to indigenous language promotion and awareness of national symbols, we are fostering mutual respect, shared identity

and meaningful interaction across race, class and geography.

88. By expanding high-impact platforms such as the Mpumalanga Cultural Xperience, strengthening community-based cultural exchanges, and deepening partnerships with municipalities, heritage institutions and the private sector, we are building a united and inclusive provincial identity where culture and heritage actively drive peaceful coexistence, social transformation and sustainable development in Mpumalanga.

89. This integration remains critical because development without cohesion is fragile, as unity is the bedrock of progress.

90. Hon Members, local government cannot be fixed without traditional leadership. Through the District Development Model, Integrated Development Planning and municipal engagement, Amakhosi play a stabilising and coordinating role, ensuring that governance responds to lived realities.

91. It was a moment of profound democratic significance when the State President, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, convened all leaders across the three spheres of government, including our esteemed traditional leaders, last Thursday, on 30 April 2026, to announce 4 November 2026 as the date for the local government elections.

92. This gesture was more than an administrative announcement; it was a deliberate affirmation that

democracy in South Africa is collective, participatory and inclusive.

93. By calling together political, administrative and traditional leadership, the President sent a clear message that the stability of our democracy rests on unity of purpose and shared responsibility.

94. In these tough and consequential elections, where communities are demanding accountable governance, effective service delivery and ethical leadership, traditional leaders are expected to play a pivotal role as custodians of social cohesion, mediators of community tensions, and anchors of moral authority.

95. Their proximity to the people places you at the centre of voter education, peaceful participation and the defence of democratic values.

96. In a time when trust in institutions is being tested, the involvement of traditional leadership stands as a stabilising force, ensuring that electoral processes are embraced not merely as contestation but as a renewal of the social contract between the people and those who serve them.

97. Esteemed leaders, as we open this House today, we are not merely opening doors; we are reaffirming a covenant between government and traditional leadership, between democracy and heritage, between past struggles and future possibilities.

98. Let us lead with humility. Let us govern with integrity. Let us serve with courage. In the words of President Nelson

Mandela: “It is in your hands to create a better world for all who live in it.”

99. Indeed, it is in our hands. Together, let us build a Mpumalanga Province that honours its ancestors, empowers its people and secures a dignified future for generations to come.
100. We call upon our traditional leaders to work with government in rebuilding trust, improving services and ensuring that no community is left behind.
101. Esteemed leaders, the future of Mpumalanga lies in unity, collaboration, and shared purpose. Let us walk this journey together, Government and Traditional Leadership, guided by the values of dignity, service, and accountability.
102. Together, we shall build a Province that honours its heritage while embracing progress.

Ngiyabonga. Ke a leboga. Ndza khensa. Thank you.