

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE PREMIER
REFILWE MTSHWENI-TSIPANE ON THE OCCASION OF THE
COMMEMORATION OF FREEDOM DAY**

DATE: 27 APRIL 2023

VENUE: SY MTHIMUNYE STADIUM, EMALAHLENI

**Programme Director;
MEC Lindiwe Ntshalintshali;**

Members of the Executive Council present;

**Executive Mayor of Nkangala District Municipality, Cllr Leah
Mabuza;**

**Our host, the Executive Mayor of Emalahleni Local
Municipality, Cllr Connie Nkalitshana;**

**The Chairperson of the Mpumalanga House of Traditional &
Khoi-san Leaders, Kgoshi Lameck Mokoena;**

Ubukhosi in our midst;

**Senior Managers of government led by the Director
General, Mr Makhukhu Mampuru;**

Leaders of all Political Parties present;

Members of the Tripartite Alliance present;

Representatives from labour, business, religious and other community-based organisations;

**The People of Emalahleni Local Municipality;
Distinguished Guests;**

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Dumelang;

Akwande,

Avuxeni

1. Programme Director, I am honoured to join you today on this auspicious day in the history of our rainbow nation. On this day, 29 years ago, South Africans of different races and creeds gathered across this beautiful nation and with a simple “x” signalled the end of the crime against humanity that was apartheid.
2. Today we commemorate that historic moment. We celebrate our triumph over ***institutionalized racism, repression, state-sponsored violence and the inhumane division of our people based on race***. On that glorious day, we demonstrated to the world that a new nation can rise from the ashes of racial intolerance and ethnic polarization.

3. Programme Director, the father of our rainbow nation, uTata President Nelson Mandela aptly described that beautiful transition when he said:

“When the history of our struggle is written.... it will tell a moving story of the selfless sacrifices that our people made, to ensure that the intolerable insult to human dignity, the apartheid crime against humanity, became a thing of the past”.

4. The birth of our rainbow nation also enabled the development of a legal framework that would entrench the principles of unity and the eradication of discrimination and the promotion of human rights.

5. Indeed, our rainbow nation developed a world renowned Constitution that includes non-alienable Bill of rights that protect all who call this beautiful nation, home. The Constitution also incorporates socio-economic rights to promote access to basic services such as water, quality education, health and housing,

6. Programme Director, this year we commemorate Freedom day under the theme ***“consolidating and safeguarding our democratic gains”***. The brutalities of the past which included detentions without trial, disappearances of freedom fighters such as ***Nokuthula Simelane***, deaths in detentions and imprisonment of those opposed to

apartheid are eternal testimonies that our freedom was never free.

7. Amongst us today are people who still carry the emotional and physical scars that remind us that our freedom that is at times taken for granted, was never free.
8. Programme Director, this year, as we commemorate the 29th year of our democratic dispensation, we also celebrate the 68th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, which underpins our country's democratic constitution.
9. The Freedom Charter states that ***“no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people. Indeed, our people go to the polls every five years to elect a government that will advance their interests and provide a better life.”***
10. Since the advent of our democratic dispensation, the ANC has entered into a compact with the people of South Africa and the people of Mpumalanga specifically.
11. In terms of this compact, we have committed ourselves to improving the quality of life for the people of Mpumalanga and restoring the dignity of our people.

SERVICE DELIVERY

12. Since 2019, we have built around 36 415 housing units for the people of Mpumalanga. We have a backlog of around 7% of households that are still in informal dwellings. This backlog will be eradicated before the end of this 6th Administration of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government.

13. Around 86% of people in Mpumalanga have access to piped water and a further 90% of our people reside in electrified dwellings.

14. We have recently completed the construction of ***Empumelelweni extensions 7 & 9 Internal Sewers*** in Emalahleni in order to improve sewage related challenges in the area.

15. Through the ***Integrated National Electrification Programme (INEP)***, we have secured R110 Million for the electrification of Siyanqoba in Emalahleni which will commence in the weeks ahead.

16. We are making progress with the construction of the ***Linah Malatjie tertiary hospital***. We have completed the environmental impact studies and construction is set to commence during the course of this year.

17. Over the past 29 years, we have demonstrated our responsive character, by responding to the needs and cries of our people. The traffic congestion complaints at Emalahleni City Centre, is, but one classical example. We will construct a bridge from Emalahleni City centre leading to Pine Ridge, Clarinet, Siyanqoba and Verena in order to improve safety and ease traffic flow in that area.

18. The celebration of this milestone, also serves as an opportunity to reflect on how far we have progressed in the mammoth task of improving the lives of our people, since democracy. We acknowledge that, much more still need to be done, over a period of time.

19. However, the steady progress of improving the quality of the lives of the poorest, must encourage us to move with greater speed to bring a better life to all our people, to finally defeat poverty and underdevelopment within our Province.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

20. Programme director, unemployment is a ticking time bomb. We are determined to confront it, through creation of sustainable employment opportunities.

21. We have set for ourselves, a target of creating at-least 90 000 youth job opportunities within the next 15 months.

22. These opportunities will come from 21 empowerment programmes across sector departments in the Provincial Government.

23. We urge the private sector, to join our efforts to massify employment opportunities in the province. Working together with Municipalities, we are determined to achieve the target of sustainable and dignified employment opportunities.

24. Programme Director, another untapped area which has the potential to be a game changer in the Province is the just energy transition.

25. I-Mpumalanga ithwele ama-power station awu-12. Yingakho sibizwa ngekhaya lomkhiqizo ka-gezi, ngoba ugezi walelizwe ofika ku-80%, utholakala la e-Mpumalanga.

26. We are also mindful of the fact that Mpumalanga produces the highest carbon emissions the country.

27. The impact of these carbon emissions is catastrophic, not only to the environment but also to the overall health of our people.

29. This is why we are advocating for the Just Energy Transition in order to balance economic activities in our province with the urgency to transition to a low-carbon economy.

30. His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa defined the just energy transition as;

“A transition from fossil fuels to green energy in a manner that will prioritise workers and communities in vulnerable industries to ensure that no one is left behind.”

31. Just energy transition must not be misconstrued as the closure of coal based power generation. It is the utilisation of coal energy generation whilst investing significantly in the development of green and sustainable energy.

32. Along with an incredible inheritance of mineral resources, our province also has extremely rich solar and wind resources. Technology has evolved. Therefore it is now becoming possible to convert these wind and solar resources into sources of clean energy and value for the Province.

33. Our priority is for the Province to continue to be the centre of energy generation in the country whilst making our economy receptive to employing young people and to enable the youth to create their own jobs through the installation of solar panels in our households, and in the malls. They must coordinate training opportunities for entrepreneurs, that venture into the energy space.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

34. Bahlali base-Mpumalanga, asibakhumbule ngaso sonkhe isikhathi, abantu abophayo ngaphakathi, ngenca yesihlava se-Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF). As we commemorate freedom day, we must spare a thought for people whose freedom and dignity is eroded by the scourge of gender based violence.

35. Programme Director, this area of Emalahleni that we are marking the celebration today, holds special memories for many people, including myself. I still have fond memories of my school, Vuma Combined School, and my former teachers, including Mr Masemola, the current Principal.

36. Kodwa inhliziyo yami iyopha ngaphakathi ngaso sonkhe isikhathi, ngenxa yezehlakalo zokushaywa kwaboMama Kanye nezingane.

37. I sometimes bury my head in shame, when I realize that Emalahleni has earned such an unfortunate reputation of a high prevalent of gender based violence cases.

38. Not a day passes by without gory stories in the media that depicts this place in a bad manner.

39. We cannot proudly proclaim to be a Province that recognises the rights enshrined in the constitution if the weakest amongst us are perennial victims of gender based violence.

40. To overcome this problem, we will invest significant resources in initiatives that will advance affirmative social values and mending the social fabric that is torn by uncouth behaviour.

41. We call upon every citizen, who call Mpumalanga their home, to help fight against the scourge of GBVF. We are satisfied that Amakhosi, under the leadership of Kgoshi Mokoena and church organizations, are committed to contribute towards the initiatives of inculcating the ethos and ethics that will help young men as future leaders. We call upon all of you to contribute towards building a great Province that protects the most vulnerable in our societies.

CONCLUSION

42. Programme Director, we must unite with business, labour, civil society and communities to develop the Mpumalanga we want.

43. A prosperous province united by the beauty of its diversity. We must create a Mpumalanga that is safe for women and children. We must create a Province where our people, regardless of race will contribute extensively to the Mpumalanga economy. It is when we defeat poverty, unemployment and inequality that we will do justice to those who paid the ultimate price for the freedom we enjoy today.

Siyathokoza.