

The Honourable Premier's Annual Address to the First Ordinary Sitting of the Fourth Session of the Fifth House

Date: 23 March 2018

Venue: The Provincial House of Traditional Leaders

Provincial Chairperson Inkhosi Ngomane and the Executive of the House of Traditional Leaders

National Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders Inkhosi SE Mahlangu

Deputy Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders, Inkhosi CE Mahlangu

Chairpersons of the Houses from various Provinces

Chairpersons of the Local Houses

Ubukhosi bonke obukhona lapha phakathi kwethu

Colleagues in the Executive Council

Executive Mayors and Councillors present here today

Mqondisi Jikelele -The Director-General of the Province, Mr T Mdakane.

Special Advisers to the Premier, Heads of Departments, Deputy Director Generals & Senior officials of Government,

Representatives of various organisations

Manene namaNenekazi

Sanibonani

Good Morning,

Lotshani,

Dumelang;

Avuxeni

1. Chairperson, it is an honour and a privilege indeed for me in my new position as the Premier of this province to stand before this August House and address ***Amakhosi endabuko*** on matters of common interest, particularly issues that touch on the promotion of well-being of your subjects.
2. Let me also take this opportunity and congratulate you and all Executive members of the Provincial House and Chairpersons of the Local Houses for your new leadership roles.
3. Your election last year signifies the trust and confidence of all Amakhosi in your leadership and I have no doubt that you will perform your duties and responsibilities to the very best of your abilities.
4. This province has a very rich history that dates back centuries, when it was populated by warrior clans who roamed the hills, plains and valleys in search of grazing land for their cattle and safety for their people.
5. Today we are proud to embrace the inheritance of our diverse traditions and cultures, which makes us the rainbow nation that we have become.

6. We will continue to draw strength and knowledge from the wisdom of our traditional leaders whose presence among us is a constant reminder that our future is strongly dependent on understanding who we are and where we come from.
7. Chairperson, the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality know no boundaries and the rural areas in our province are the most affected due to absence of economic activity.
8. Our youth are roaming the streets aimlessly hoping that today will be better than yesterday, and tomorrow than today. ***We cannot fail them.*** Working together as Government, Indlu Yobukhosi, our Civil Societies and Business Formations, we must find sustainable solutions.
9. Our determination and vigour to fight these challenges require commitment similar to that which we as a nation displayed when we were fighting for our political liberation.
10. Our people are looking up to you Chairperson and members of your Executive, to provide the kind of leadership that will inspire and give them hope.

11. Chairperson, we are delighted to have Inkhosi S.E Mahlangu, the Chairperson of the National House of Traditional Leaders, in our midst as a true son of the Mpumalanga soil.
12. Let me take this opportunity and thank you Ndabezitha Mahlangu for having demonstrated good quality leadership and serving your people with distinction from the time you were in this Province up until now as the Chairperson of National House of Traditional Leaders.
13. Chairperson, this year marks the dawn of a new era of hope, of servant leadership and of accelerated development.
14. Our President, His Excellency, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa spurred us into action when he introduced the "***Thuma Mina***" journey, during the State of the Nation address in February this year.
15. His Excellency also extended this journey to include Amakhosi/Makgoshi in his inaugural speech to mark the opening of the National House of Traditional Leaders earlier this year, when he said, and I quote:

16. ***“Traditional leadership needs to play a prominent and influential role in the growth of our economy, the creation of employment and the transformation of our society”.***
17. Chairperson, the resolutions adopted by the House during the Traditional Leaders indaba in September last year are receiving our urgent attention.
18. As a response to your resolutions, Government will pay special attention to strengthening the capacity building programmes for this House with a specific focus on financial management.
19. We will also be addressing the audit finding by our Risk and Compliance Unit that some of our traditional councils need special attention on financial management and cooperative governance matters.
20. The Gert Sibande District Municipality’s collaborative initiative with the University of KwaZulu-Natal in empowering Amakhosi by enrolling them in the leadership development programme is a step in the right direction.

21. We believe that such programmes will go a long way in sharpening the leadership skills of Amakhosi.
22. We have also identified the need to empower our esteemed young Traditional Leaders on traditional protocol and etiquette. However, I must hasten to indicate that some of these resolutions shall be implemented in phases as guided by legislation and the competencies of the different spheres of government.
23. We strongly agree with this House that the working relations between municipalities and traditional councils must be improved.
24. Chairperson, this resolution resonates well with the call made by President Ramaphosa during the opening of the House recently, in which he said, and I quote:
25. ***“We look to this House to work with government and other social partners to build a capable developmental state that will deliver clean water, sanitation, clinics and tarred roads especially to those who live in our remote rural villages”.***

26. We commend the collaboration between the District Municipalities, their respective local councils and Amakhosi. We call upon those that may still be left behind to pay attention to this very important matter.
27. The initiative of Operation Vuka Sisebente (OVS) has strengthened the harmonious relationship and created a conducive environment for co-operative governance between municipalities and traditional councils in dealing with service delivery matters.
28. To compliment this programme, government has introduced the ***Satise Silalele App***, which is a service delivery initiative that allows citizens of this Province to report service delivery issues to Government by using mobile phones and tablets.
29. We would like to encourage Amakhosi and their subjects to make use of this initiative by reporting any service delivery shortcomings or failures.
30. For example, if there is a burst water pipe in your area you can use this mobile app and even take pictures of the incident and send it to the nerve centre, which will immediately pass it on to the relevant department to take necessary corrective action.

31. Chairperson, the restoration of the dignity of Amakhosi, as espoused by this ANC-led government is not just in words, but is anchored in the action we are taking in each financial year.
32. Notwithstanding the limited financial resources at our disposal, we remain resolute in our commitment to strengthen the institution of traditional leadership.
33. In the previous financial year we completed the construction of the following traditional councils, namely: ***Bakgatla Ba Moepi*** (in Dr JS Moroka), ***Mahlaphahlapha*** (in Mkhondo), ***Mantjolo*** (in Chief Albert Luthuli) and ***Mlambo*** (in Nkomazi).
34. In this financial year, we will develop a programme of action to officially hand over all the newly constructed offices.
35. Bo-Ndabezitha, the need for the preservation of our cultural values, traditions and customs is not misplaced. We have learnt through history that our heritage, indigenous knowledge systems and languages are vulnerable and may be on the brink of extinction if no means are utilised to protect and promote them.

36. It is for this reason that our dedication to support the affirmation of customary law values as an appropriate dispute resolution mechanism remains critical.
37. The milestone achievements in the advancement of IsiNdebele language by Ingwenyama Makhosonke II, has not gone unnoticed. The determination by his Majesty to raise funds and subsequently enroll students at the University of Venda is producing the desired outcome.
38. The number of registered students for isiNdebele rose from nine (9) in 2010 to eighteen (18) in 2012 at the same University. The graduation of thirteen (13) students, one of whom completed a Master's degree is a cause for celebration.
39. This initiative must be commended and supported by all of us since it goes a long way in the recognition and promotion of one of the previously marginalized indigenous languages.
40. ***Ngwenyama yesitjaba senkethu, siyathokoza. U-Zimu akwandisele ngaloko okwenzela isitjaba samaNdebele. Bayethe Ngwenyama!!!***

41. Chairperson, land ownership in the country is undoubtedly an emotional and sensitive matter. It was a landmark victory for the majority of this country when Parliament voted for the appropriation of land without compensation to redress the historical loss of land by the majority during the painful past.

42. We, as the Provincial Government, support this move, as it is the only solution and pathway to address the land ownership imbalances. We take solace from President Ramaphosa's assurance that land expropriation without compensation shall be implemented in a responsible manner that increases agricultural production and ensures that the land is returned to those from whom it was stolen during the dark years of ***colonialism*** and ***apartheid***.

43. We are expecting that all the Houses will engage in honest and robust debates on this highly emotional matter. We strongly discourage any inappropriate and illegal land invasions. We call upon the law enforcement agencies to act harshly against such perpetrators.

44. We support with great anticipation the partnership agreement signed between Grain South Africa and Traditional Leaders in Gert Sibande, led by the Chairperson of the Local House, Inkhosi Nhlapho.
45. We are optimistic that the agreement will create the groundwork for the eradication of the socio-economic challenges faced by rural communities and create a source of income for the unemployed whilst increasing agricultural productivity.
46. This initiative by Inkhosi Nhlapho is aligned with the clarion call made by my predecessor and now the Deputy President, Honourable DD Mabuza, during the State of the Province Address, when he said, and I quote:
47. ***“We need to appreciate that our success as the Province in growing large-scale agriculture depends on the utilization of our arable land to optimal capacity. This includes utilizing communal land to capacity. That is why we call upon our revered traditional leadership to play an active role in this regard.”***

48. My predecessor's words are an assertion that indeed the institution of traditional leadership remains a political and administrative centre of governance for rural communities in South Africa and Africa at large.
49. Chairperson, agriculture remains the only sector that has the potential to emancipate our rural communities from the bondage of abject poverty. My government remains committed to supporting Amakhosi and their subjects through programmes like ***Phezukomkhono Mlimi*** and ***Masibuyele Esibayeni***.
50. Chairperson, the issue of deaths in the initiation schools remains a major concern in our Province. We need to work harder to clamp down on illegal initiation schools.
51. Illegal initiation schools are the primary source of the death cases. Various departments have been collaborating to end this carnage.

52. We will double our efforts to strengthen the capacity of the multi-Departmental ***Ingoma Forum*** to avail adequate resources to ensure that all initiation schools comply with health standards and the Ingoma Act. We will be targeting those who cash in on unsuspecting parents and children, treating them as mobile ATMs.
53. Any death during ukusoka must be treated as a crime. The initiation schools where such deaths occur will be treated as crime scenes. We will be relentless in our fight to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to book.
54. In cases where negligence ***has been proven***, we will advocate for incarceration with ***no option of bail*** and sentencing that ***does not include the option of a fine***.
55. Bo-Ndabezitha, cases of royal disputes continue to plague this institution. The Committee on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims concluded its work in 2016. The establishment of that Committee by the former Premier, sought to resolve the disputes and claims that undermine and set back this sacred institution.

56. We are concerned, as your subjects, about these disputes. We urge you to keep royal matters within the royal families. We call upon our communities and all other interested parties to give the inner royal family (*Lusendvo*) the space to appoint a rightful heir to the throne during the succession process.
57. Any external interference outside the nucleus of the inner royal family will produce the undesirable outcome with a serious threat to the stability of that royal house.
58. As a Provincial Government we shall continue to oversee the implementation of both inter and intra governmental relations and cooperative governance to support the Provincial Institution of Traditional Leaders in performing their constitutional mandate.
59. We will be working with the National Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs on an ancestral and family tree programme for Traditional Leaders. We appeal for your co-operation in this initiative which will assist in bringing the disputes to an end.

60. Chairperson, South Africa still remains gripped by the drought situation, and remains on the list of 40 countries with serious scarcity of water. The situation is compounded by the low levels of rain due to unfavourable weather patterns. The water levels in the rivers and the dams are very low. This calls for all of us to use water sparingly.
61. The commitment by the ANC-led government to provide access to water to all communities by 2030 is well on track. However, the drought poses a serious threat for the realization of this target. The latest statistics indicate that 88% of the population in Mpumalanga now have access to water.
62. We appeal to Amakhosi and our communities in rural areas to save water. We need to harvest rainwater and fix the taps where leakages occur.
63. Chairperson, the recent incidents of ritual murders of people with albinism is a serious cause for concern. We call upon members of this House to condemn such killings in the strongest possible terms.

64. As the custodians of our culture and traditions, we call upon you to root out such unacceptable behaviour amongst your subjects. This barbaric action should be nipped in the bud and the perpetrators be sent to prison where they belong. It is foreign to us and we should rid ourselves of such ***cruel and barbaric behaviour.***
65. Chairperson, our Constitution recognises the institution, status and role of traditional leadership in dispute resolution, as well as the application of customary practices in traditional courts, of course subject to the Constitution.
66. To this end, the National Government has decided to introduce the Traditional Courts Bill that will provide a uniform legislative framework for the structure and functioning of traditional courts, in line with constitutional imperatives and values.
67. This Bill seeks to replace the remaining provisions of the Black Administration Act, 1927, and some provisions of former homeland legislation, which still regulate the resolution of disputes by the institution of traditional leadership, which are in stark conflict with constitutional values.

68. It further seeks to address certain abuses prevailing in some traditional courts as they currently exist; protect the public interest; and enhance accountability in the resolution of disputes in accordance with evolving customs and practices in the new constitutional dispensation.
69. We therefore urge this House to familiarize itself with the provisions of this Bill but also engage in debates and discussions about its contents so that the final product accommodates the views of the House.
70. Chairperson, as I conclude, South Africa and the international community ***are united*** in celebrating the 100th anniversary of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and Mama Albertina Sisulu this year.
71. Two rare breeds indeed, distinguished and remarkable South Africans, Madiba and Mama Sisulu epitomised ethical leadership that we are all aspiring to. Their fight against indignity stood the test of time until their last breath.

72. These attributes made these two leaders stand head and shoulders above their contemporaries. As we celebrate their anniversary, President Ramaphosa has called on all of us to work towards the realization of their shared vision of a democratic, just and equitable society.

73. Chairperson, with these few words I now declare the House officially opened and wish you success in your activities.

Hha khensa.