

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HONOURABLE MEC R MHAULE DURING
THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF ISINDEBELE DICTIONARY AND
MOTHER TONGUE CELEBRATION**

**DR J.S Moroka Local Municipality: Kameelrivier Community Hall,
Ga-Morwe**

28 March 2014

Programme Directors

**Executive Mayor of Dr J.S. Moroka Local Municipality: Cllr G
Mthimunye**

All Councilors present today

Local Traditional Leaders

Editor-in Chief of the isiNdebele Dictionary: Ms K.S Mahlangu

**Chairperson of the Provincial Language Committee: Mr. P.J.
Masilela**

CEO of Pan South African Language Board: Mr. M Zwane

**Representative of the National Language Committee: Ms M.N.
Masombuka**

Government Officials

The Media

Invited Guests

Community Members

Lotshani,

I must hasten to indicate that it is a singular honour for me that as we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of this democratic government and the liberation of our people, we gather like this to affirm the commitment made by the government of the people that; all of us shall be treated equally and shall benefit from the programmes of government.

Last week on the 22nd March 2014 we were at Marapyane in this municipality to celebrate the Human Rights Day. We were celebrating the fact that the ushering of freedom and democracy inherently brought about a plethora of human rights which are well documented in our world renowned Constitution.

Today we are gathered here to hand-over both the Monolingual and Trilingual Dictionaries in isiNdebele. It was not a mistake that we decided to hand over these dictionaries during the Human Rights Month. Chapter 1 of the Constitution which deals with the Founding Provisions of the Constitution provides for eleven (11) official languages in the country; and isiNdebele is one of those languages.

Section 6 (2) of the Constitution reads thus, “***Recognizing the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.***”

Further, Section 30 of the Bill of Rights reads thus, “***Everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights.***”

In giving life to the above and in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution, the Mpumalanga Provincial Languages Bill has been approved by the Executive Council, the Portfolio Committee has already held community consultations on the document and now the Bill will be tabled to the Legislature for approval, after-which the Premier shall enact it.

The Mpumalanga Provincial Languages Bill provides for the development and promotion of previously marginalized languages and in our case it is siSwati and isiNdebele languages. This does not mean that we are not going to give attention to the rest of other languages found in the province. All languages spoken and used in the province shall be attended to; however, priority shall be given to siSwati and isiNdebele.

We will be expecting all stakeholders to embrace the Mpumalanga Provincial Languages Bill more especially our schools. We will expect the Mpumalanga Provincial Languages Bill and the Provincial Policy to

feature prominently on the agenda and curriculum of the schools in Mpumalanga.

All schools in the province should be able to learn, understand and speak the indigenous language of the province. This is a challenge we have and a challenge we are committed to confront.

Equally we will expect parents to also play their role in ensuring that our indigenous languages get promoted from their homes. Let us encourage our kids to know their languages.

Former President Nelson Mandela once said ***“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language that goes to his heart.”***

Programme Director, this is the premise we are departing from as government. That in order for our people to participate in the transformation of society and also make a meaningful contribution to the development of this country, the issue of language development and promotion should be central and uppermost.

Language is important to the development of society because it helps to shape reality for members within the society. Language allows us to attach meanings to certain things and to attach symbols to concepts.

Without language we cannot be able to interact and communicate with each other and cannot have a shared understanding of the concepts like freedom and democracy. We need to use language to achieve a degree of solidarity. This will help us to form a base for most social interactions.

Research has shown that language has a direct contribution and impact on the transformation of society. This has also been traced in the education sector, that learners who are taught in their mother language understands better their subjects and thus achieving higher results in those subjects.

This means that if we are to reduce the illiteracy rate in the province in particular and in the country in general, the issue of language needs to be given adequate attention.

Today we are gathered here to give credence to the launch and celebration of Mother Tongue. As we celebrate mother tongue, we are equally giving you the requisite tools to promote and develop our local languages and in this case the new Monolingual and Trilingual Dictionaries play an important part.

Programme Director, the Mother Tongue Celebration is also aimed at promoting language awareness and ensuring the development of the previously marginalized languages. We need to continue emphasizing the importance of indigenous languages, as Home Language and Language of Teaching and Learning.

Uma singalisa ukuzikhukhumeza ngamalimi wethu, sizokulahlekelwa kubaluleka kwekululeko, sizohluleka nokuthokozela umbuso we ntando ye nengi. Sisitjhaba sisoke kufuneka sibambisane, kuze sikwazi ukulondoloza noku vikela ama limi wethu weSewula Africa.

Loku sikwenza ngoba amalimu wethu adlala indima ekulu ekukhulisweni kwabantwana bethu. Abantwana bethu kufuneka bakhuliswe bazi ukubaluleka kweelimi zabo.

Like I said before when quoting Former President Mandela, the deepest feeling of heart can be expressed by one through their mother tongue only. I am sure those of you who were and are still monitoring the murder case against Oscar Pistorius have realized the importance of language in putting across a particular message, so that you can avoid being misunderstood.

According to Census 2011, there is a notable growth in the number of isiNdebele speaking people in the country. In the year 2001 there were 711 821 people speaking isiNdebele compared to the 1, 090 223 in 2011. This finding should then be reflected in the manner in which we implement our programmes and projects. This means that we have much more reasons to promote these indigenous languages.

The reality of the matter is that some people consider it prestigious to speak or write the English language at the expense of local languages. Many South African intellectuals are also prejudiced to the teaching of

local languages, particularly the formative periods in our basic schools right up to the tertiary level.

The impression created is that our languages are not worthy of any scientific analysis and study and are therefore not worth studying. This is an affront to our ancestors. We need to turn around this situation and ensure that our indigenous languages occupy the strategic position in the transformation and development of society.

We need to change this situation in our homes, in schools and in public places. We should confront this situation and challenge with same vigour and spirit we confronted the apartheid regime. We owe this to the martyr of our freedom; we owe this to the heroes and heroines of the struggle against domination and bondage.

As we launch the Monolingual and Trilingual Dictionaries, let us remain committed to the ideal and the imperatives of our Constitution especially the development of our indigenous languages. It is worth noting that International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in November 1999.

On 16 May 2009 the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution called upon Member States "to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world". By the same resolution, the General Assembly proclaimed 2008 as the International Year of Languages, to promote unity in diversity and international understanding, through multilingualism and multiculturalism. It is thus incumbent on all of us to ensure that our heritage in the form of our vernacular is promoted. This can only be done by preserving our mother languages by speaking and teaching them. We owe it ourselves to preserve our languages as no one can do this for us.

The launch of the IsiNdebele dictionaries is but another step towards our self preservation.

The United Nations International Mother Language Day reminds us that Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity and remind you about the responsibility we all have on the 07 May 2014. Let us mobilize each other and go to the polls in our majority and vote intelligently. Let us vote for a Better Life for All. Let us vote in unity as we move South Africa Forward.

Neglecting our mother languages is detrimental to our spiting of our own very noses. That is detriment to our being and our heritage.

Asizikhukhumeze ngolimi lwethu sithjaba sama Africa! Amalimi wethu ayi mvelaphi yethu.

NGIYATHOKOZA