

Remarks by the Premier of Mpumalanga, Thabang Makwetla, at the King Mantjolo Annual Day Sunday 24 April 2005, Enkhonjaneni Royal Kraal

Programme Directors

Inkhosi Manyovu

Their Majesties the Kings

Honourable Amakhosi

Members of the Executive Council

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Mnisi, Mvuleni, Nkophe zimayaka,

Mfula longawelwa,

uwelwa tinkonjane letiphapha emafini,

Tsabela abayeni,

Gwadlagwadla,

We feel truly humbled to stand before you, our leader, and to commemorate a day of major significance in the history of the descendants of **MANYOVU LONDZENGA, LONGADZINYWA KUSUTELA.**

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Royal House and the people of Mantjolo most humbly for having invited us to this occasion. In an age when humanity and our culture are threatened by countless hazards, it gives one hope to know that we still have time to celebrate our heritage.

Our resolve to preserve our culture and pass on our heritage to our children and their children, is truly commendable. Our success as a nation depends, in no small measure, on the conservation of our heritage sites and the preservation of our culture, similar to what we are doing today. We need, as a nation, to take stock of what we have accomplished and what still needs to be done in preserving our heritage and rewriting our history.

The victory that we have scored against apartheid has laid the firm basis for all the people of South Africa to unite across colour, language, ethnic and religious barriers. It has launched us on the course of realising our true potential. But the nation also needs to come to a proper understanding of our history which was most grievously affected by the ravages and distortions of apartheid and colonialism.

That is why it is important that these celebrations, this cultural festival must add value to our task of forging a common nationhood.

It should also help us to display to other nations of the world, as well as to ourselves, our capacity to give humanity what is proudly the product of the composite effort of all our people in reclaiming the past and defining the future..

Programme Director, I believe that as we gather here today, proud descendants of King Manyovu, Mantjolo, Mnisi and Sgulumba, we do so in the full knowledge that we are a people united in working for a better life for all. A better life that we promised our people soon after the demise of apartheid a decade ago.

Indeed in the past ten years we have gone a long way in ensuring that we work towards that better life. In the past decade we have brought water and electricity to many households. We have built houses to accommodate

our people. We have opened access to quality health care and education and we have tackled the demon of racism.

Today, South Africa has a caring government, with housing programmes for the poor, with social security grants for pensioners, young children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. We have programmes to redistribute land.

Today, South Africa is a country with a justice system that serves the people, guided by the Constitution and laws which are intended to prevent abuse. Today, South Africa is a partner among countries of Africa, working together to bring peace and development to our continent. With other countries and peoples of the world, we pursue peace, development and international relations that benefit all.

All these things were achieved because our people, including the people of Mantjolo, put shoulder to the wheel in our collective efforts to create work and fight poverty.

Programme Director, the people of Emamvuleni come from a long line of powerful ancestors who dedicated their lives to the cause of their people, who at all times did not flinch in the fight for a better life.

Like many of the Kings and Amakhosi gathered here today, your contribution and participation in our struggle has brought us where we are today.

Working with all of you, our traditional leaders, to ensure that the people in your areas also have the possibility to participate in the processes of socio-economic development to which we are all committed.

Today we once again commit ourselves to forging closer developmental relations with you as traditional leaders, your institutions and your people.

We do so because of our conviction that as traditional leaders you have a critical role to play in our integrated rural development programme. We knew then - as we know now – that government alone will not be able to face the monumental challenges imposed on us by the new democracy.

Our institution of traditional leadership continues to enjoy an indispensable place in our democratic system of governance. The legislative framework that is now firmly in place, clearly spells out the purpose and role of this institution in our society. We can now say that there is a guaranteed future existence and recognition of this institution.

As always, our Government will continue to rely on your wise counsel on matters of traditional leadership, custom, heritage and language as you are the rightful custodians of these values. It is with a deep sense of pride and fulfillment that today we find ourselves taking part in your celebrations.

You all know that traditional authority is a tried and tested system of governance that existed long before the advent of colonialism. The African National Congress was the first amongst political parties in our country to address the question of traditional leadership.

The ANC's first constitution adopted in 1909, provided for a forum within Congress known as the Upper House of Chiefs. This attitude of the ANC created a framework, which allowed traditional leaders to look at local problems and address them from the point of view of the national agenda, which sought to advance the interests of the African majority against the oppressor.

It is this kind of attitude towards the institution of traditional leadership which explains the reason why many of the leaders of the African National Congress were themselves highly respected traditional leaders. They understood that the practices of customary law and tradition could only flourish under conditions of freedom and democracy.

During this period many traditional leaders, like those who came before them, fiercely resisted every attempt by colonialists to take over their land and subject their people to discriminatory policies.

My leaders, we know that like your forebears you will not flinch when your people turn to you for guidance during the forthcoming local government elections. These elections offer us yet another opportunity and platform to

renew and consolidate governance at local level. Like we have done in the past, let us go out and mobilise our subjects to actively take part in these elections.

I wish to congratulate and thank those of our traditional leaders in our province who are actively participating in the governance of their municipal areas, either as elected public representatives or as traditional leaders of the people. We see so many opportunities for close co-operation between elected local structures and the institution of traditional leadership in our Province.

These opportunities can be multiplied if traditional leaders can continue to support and participate in these municipalities in their ex-officio capacities.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, in partnership with all sectors of society, we must continue to give absolute priority to the elections. We must use the elections to build the high road to destiny. Mpumalanga must become a beehive of activity, a nation at work to build a better life. More than 400 years of resilience brought us where we are today.

As we gather to honour King Mantjolo, we are aware that the people are glad to have taken that first step towards reclaiming their history.

Today as we celebrate and enjoy the festivities, let us not forget that from tomorrow we have to roll up our sleeves and get down to work.

I thank you.