

**REMARKS BY HONOURABLE PREMIER RM MTSHWENI-TSIPANE ON THE OCCASION OF THE RESPONSE TO THE 2024 POST SOPA DEBATE**

**DATE: 8 MARCH 2024**

**VENUE: CHAMBER, MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE**

---

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker;

The Chief Whip of the Legislature;

Honourable Members of the Legislature;

Honourable Members of the Executive Council;

The Acting DG Mr Peter Nyoni and all Senior government officials;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning;

Sanibonani;

Avuxeni;

1. Madam Speaker, thank you for convening this sitting to enable me to respond to the post SOPA debate held earlier this week.
2. I also wish to relay my gratitude to Members of this august house who participated in the post SOPA debate.
3. Indeed, Madam Speaker, I was enthralled by the remarks made by honourable members of this house including those who sought to punch holes and criticize my remarks and those who have chosen to see a glass that is half full and not half empty.
4. I listened attentively to those who acknowledge and see progress against those who either refuse to see the progress we have made. MEC Manzini described this phenomenon quite succinctly when she referred to it as the battle between superstition and science.
5. I agree with Honourable Manzini that facts make science whilst superstitions emerge from blind faith which leads to irrational thinking and irrational behaviour.
6. But I also agree with the leader of government business Honourable Mashilo that during election time , critics will do and say anything to dismiss the progress that we have made because it does not serve their political aspirations, it goes against their narrow selfish interests and defeats the narrative of a failed Province.

7. Madam Speaker, let me emphasise the fact that we are receptive and amenable to constructive criticism because we use it as a valuable tool that gives us ideas on how to improve service delivery to our people.
8. Constructive criticism is intended to be a reflection of the constituencies, Honourable Members represent. It is incumbent upon all of us , who are members of this house, to serve the interests of the people that elected us to represent them with the necessary, honesty integrity and accountability.
9. It is therefore your choice whether you represent your constituencies well and express their aspirations and desires or you misrepresent them by grandstanding.
10. Madam Speaker, I agree with Honourable Thomo that the ANC led government remains the only agent for change that inspires our people to bring about socio economic transformation and build a national democratic society as envisaged by the Freedom Charter.
11. We are mindful that young people constitute over 60% of the population in our Province. The Government I have been deployed to lead, has chosen a path that focuses on programmes that will develop young people.
12. We see young people as partners and leaders of tomorrow who must be nurtured and empowered so that they can identify and respond to community needs.

13. We are grooming leaders that are able to be empathetic, selfless and progressive individuals who are committed to making a positive impact in their communities and ultimately contribute to developing the Mpumalanga of our dreams.
14. The ANC led government runs numerous programmes that are geared towards capacitating young people, enriching them and preparing them for the now and the future.
15. It is therefore not surprising that youth programmes like the Premier's Youth Development Fund and other programmes run by all spheres of government are enjoying tremendous success.
16. We have come to realize and accept that global technological advancement will determine who succeeds in the future and who gets left behind.
17. We have resolved to invest in AI skills development from an early age of child development and roll out to Primary and Secondary education.
18. We will also continue to invest in our community libraries by installing software programmes that make it easy for young people to be creative and innovative.

19. Honourable Thomo is also correct about our Expanded Public Works Programme. This programme has become the backbone of our community job creation programme.
20. The EPWP has guaranteed millions of our poor people throughout the country of at least a plate of food on their table.
21. It is now recognized by international partners and critics as one of the best poverty alleviation tools within the SADC group of countries.
22. Madam Speaker, I wanted to thank Honourable Mkhabela for sharing the names and locations of schools that have infrastructural challenges.
23. We are investing significantly to eradicate infrastructural deficits in schools across the Province. We want our schools to be conducive to the culture of teaching and learning.
24. Madam Speaker, we are also aware of unfavourable conditions of our roads.
25. As I indicated in my State of the Province Address a week ago, we will be rolling out rehabilitation and maintenance programmes that will include roads, schools, clinics and other social infrastructure.

*26. Kancane kancane Mhlonishwa uMkhabela siyeza nakuzo zonke emigwaqo esaselele emuva.*

27. Madam Speaker, Honourable Sithole's insinuation that the ANC led government being divisive is disingenuous.
28. From the onset of our democratic dispensation in 1994 it was the late President Nelson Mandela and the ANC government that sought to engage in national reconciliation and nation building of our young democracy.
29. The ANC in this province has always believed in and worked hard for a South Africa and specifically a Mpumalanga that is united, non-racial, non-sexist and a democratic society.
30. Furthermore, It is the ANC that introduced laws that promote nation building , unity and reconciliation.
31. Our nation building efforts are people centred and are founded upon our quest to deepen our democracy and culture of human rights and mobilize all South Africans across all racial lines to take active part in changing their lives for the better.
32. Contrary to owning up to the wrongs of the past the DA leadership believes that there was no oppression or subjugation of the majority of the people in this country and in our Province.
33. This is very unfortunate and is tantamount to historical revision. It further undermines the legacies of all those who

made the ultimate sacrifice for the democracy we enjoy today.

34. However, this unbecoming and intransigent attitude towards reconciliation by the opposition parties shall never deter us from pursuing our goal of creating a society based on democratic values and social justice and fundamental human rights.

35. I therefore call upon honourable Sithole to join us and build a better Mpumalanga rather than engage in baseless and unfounded accusations that are devoid of any facts and truth.

36. It is very true honourable Latchminarian that education is the key to success, allowing individuals to pursue their goals and personal growth.

37. It is also true that for education to be successful we need to invest more resources on early childhood development because this is the foundation base that benefits children in formal schooling.

38. It is also beneficial later in life from improved health, social and economic outcomes and reduce intergenerational poverty.

39. We pride ourselves as a province for having invested heavily on ECDs and we are now reaping the rewards. More investment in this sector of education is envisaged.

40. A vastly improved throughput is as a direct result of our many progressive programmes, ECDs being one of them.
41. Madam Speaker, Honourable Grobler regards the work of the ANC led government as being substandard. Again, Honourable Groblers, bumbers don't lie. Figures don't lie honourable Glober.
42. Our commitment to the ideals of the Freedom Charter remain unquestionable which by and large are geared towards the full realization of the National Democratic Revolution.
43. Key among these is the issue of land ownership. We have laid a solid foundation for transferring land from the hands of the minority to the owners of this land who were dispossessed by the colonial powers.
44. We are therefore are delighted by progress in our land reform programmes that honourable Shiba captured so well.
45. We believe that without land ownership our people remain poor. Without sufficient land our people cannot become farmers and producers.
46. Land is an asset that appreciates in value, and it allows our people to create wealth and should be used productively.



47. To avoid productive land lying fallow, we are working with CPAs and land Trusts, in assisting them get investors who can form Public Private Partnerships and invest on their land and make it productive and profitable.
48. We have seen examples of land owners who have partnered with credible investors who harbours no ulterior motives other than to invest and get an equal share of profits on investment.
49. One such project is the land owned by Matsamo Communal Property Association in Nkomazi in our province which was visited by Deputy President Paul Mashatile recently.
50. The ANC led government has taken leaf from this partnership and would like to see the model replicated in many other CPAs and Trusts that are struggling with investment.
51. Working with the national government, we will speed up the process of finalization of all land claims that are still outstanding and make sure that land is returned to the rightful owners.
52. We will leave no stone unturned and shall never compromise on this demand.

53. Equally so we have taken a strong decision that no productive land shall be made fallow.
54. CPAs who cannot work together will have to cede and lease that land to farmers who want to make it productive.
55. We also take pride Honourable Shiba in seeing our emerging farmers embracing technology in farming and getting national and international awards for their innovations.
56. Honourable Webber, the ANC works as a collective, not as individuals. We do not have a personality cult leadership designed to glorify me as a Premier, magnify my ideology and legitimize the rule of government so that it is associated with me.
57. I am part of the collective leadership and my achievements are the achievements of the ruling party. The ANC as a collective is the leader of society and the leader of government and therefore any legacy belongs to the ANC.
58. If your members glorify you as the leader of the Freedom Front Plus in this province, you can continue basking in that glory hoping that one day you will become the Premier of this province and have your own personal legacy.
59. Manje-ke njengomuntu omdala engimhloniphayo, ngikuthatha njengobaba kimi kuhle phela uwakhethe kahle amazwi akho ikakhulukazi ngoba uyasazi nesiZulu, ukuthi

iNjobo enhle yileyo ethungelwa ebandla, thina konke esikwenzayo kwaANC sikwenza sibambisene akekho ogcina esengunqaphambili njengomlomo wembongolo.

60. Musa ukuzehlisa isithunzi ngoba nakhu wena uyisotsha eliyikhuzayo uwedwa lapha ephalamende uyazibusa ubucabanga ukuthi sonke sifana nawe.

61. Thina sibaningi lapha ephalamende, siya-consultha futhi udumo lwethu udumo lweANC wena udumo lweqembu lakho olwakho wedwa ngoba bathi kulele kunye lakuwe ukuba kubili ngabe kuyavusana.

62. Madam Speaker, working with our municipalities, a significant number of them who have improved their financial management and received unqualified audits and some clean audits.

63. Assisted by the national department of water and sanitation, and our social partners from the private sector, we are addressing the issues of water shortages as well as the quality of water that we are providing to our communities.

64. We are aware of challenges in some municipalities and these challenges are receiving our undivided urgent attention. We are also dealing with sewer spillages and we are building technical capacity at local government level.

65. In my State of the Province Address I alluded to a number of projects that we will soon be handing over to our communities and those that are in the pipeline.
66. The ANC government will continue to improve the capacity of our government to meet our obligation to the citizens of this province in the area of service delivery, economic growth, job creation, small and medium sized enterprise development and support, strengthening our social programmes and decisively dealing with crime and corruption.
67. Our people can see and appreciate the progress we have made and we have no doubt that they will want us to come back and continue with the good work that we have been doing for the past 30 years.
68. I thank you.