

STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY LIMPOPO PREMIER MR. SELLO MOLOTO TO THE THIRD SITTING OF THE THIRD DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATURE OF LIMPOPO.

09 February 2006

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Deputy Speaker and Members of this august House,
Executive Mayors, Mayors and Speakers of Municipalities,
Honourable members of the National Assembly and NCOP,
Members of the Judiciary,
Leaders of Opposition Parties,
Chairperson and members of the House of Traditional Leaders,
Former MPs and MPLs,
Leadership of the ANC and other Political organizations,
Stalwarts and veterans of our struggle,
Religious leaders,
Youth, women, business, labour and community leaders here present,
Leadership and Heads of Chapter nine institutions and all other institutions supporting our democracy,
Provincial Commissioner of the SAPS,
Director General and members of our Senior Management Service,
Media representatives,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
The people of Limpopo,

In our first State of the Province address in 2004, we started off by quoting the words of wise counsel from one of the finest brains of the Province, comrade Lawrence Madimetja Phokanoka who once said:

“We should not make a mistake of finding ourselves on the wrong side of history. He further intimated that “there is no earthly force which is capable of stopping a determined nation from achieving its chosen destiny.”

It is unfortunate that once more death has decided to rob us of this irreplaceable monument which has always served as a guide and an inspiration to our nation. The Province is indeed much poorer at this moment. As if what has happened to this icon and hero of our struggle is not enough, this august chamber was equally robbed and weakened of our erstwhile Chief whip in this legislature, comrade France Mofapa Mohlala who has been very instrumental in driving and steering the activities of this chamber in order to equal the task at hand. These two heroes of our struggle and many others in this Province who have departed us, have lived and died for an ideal of a just, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa; a South Africa free of poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease.

We would like to take this opportunity to call on the people of the Province to recommit and rededicate themselves to the vows and resolve they have made at the gravesides of these gallant heroes who would never have betrayed the ideals of freedom and democracy.

Ari nga do vha hangwa, vhahali vhahashu! A hi nge swikoti ku rivala tinhenha ta tiko ra hina! Re ikana go tšwetša pele dikeno ka moka tše bagale ba ba di lwetšego!

Honourable Speaker

In pursuit of these ideals, the Provincial Government has been engaged in fruitful discussions with representatives of the Afrikaner community in the Province. It is heartening to note that indeed many South Africans of various persuasions and diverse national groupings across the board have embraced the notion of a just, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. Our experience of these engagements with

representative of Afrikaans speaking organizations have proven that we share equal passion and energy in our quest to build a united South Africa that truly belongs to all.

Dominee Gielie Joubert of Hout-Kruis Gemeenskapkerk, sums up the spirit of these engagements in the letter he wrote to us dated 23 November 2005 where he makes the following bold assertion:

“Life is ironic. I have never been invited by a white Premier for talks in the past and now my first invitation came from a black Premier! Thank you very much”.

His bold and courageous remarks serve as a good measure of the extent to which as a country we have moved in achieving the ideal of non-racialism. We take it that these remarks capture the feelings and imaginations of many South Africans. Equally we can pronounce that we are on the threshold of significant racial integration and long lasting reconciliation which guarantees all of us a good future. Honourable Speaker, It is our pleasure to further take this opportunity to appreciate the humbling words entailed in the statement issued by Agri-Limpopo, published in the Observer newspaper of December 08, 2005 where the same message of reconciliation and goodwill is reiterated. The article reads as follows:

“Agri Limpopo het Premier Sello Moloto bedank en gelukgewens met die suksesvolle gesprek wat hy onlangs met groepe belê het wat die Afrikaanssprekende gemeenskap van Limpopo verteenwoordig. Dit sluit in Agri Limpopo, Transvaal Landbou Unie Suid Afrika Noord streek, die Afrikaanse Taal and Kultuurvereëning (ATKV), die Afrikanerbond, die Vakbond Solidariteit, die NG-Kerk, die Hervormde Kerk en verskeie ander kerkgroepe. Meneer Gert Rall, uitgetrede vise-President van Agri-Limpopo, wat pas aangestel is as die instansie se regeringskakelpersoon, sê die vergadering was die tweede van sy soort wat Moloto belê het. Verskeie knelpunte is tydens die onlangse “baie positiewe vergadering bespreek”.

Meneer Rall het oor die vergadering gesê hy dink dit is baie “groot geestig” van Moloto om op die manier ware versoening en rekonsiliatie te bewerkstellig”. Hy het Moloto bedank vir sy “oop- deur- beleid”, dat hy die geleentheid skep om te gesels, dat hy luister wat mense vir hom wil sê.”

What the article says is:

“Agri-Limpopo thanks the Premier and also congratulate him for the successful discussions he has had with different groups representing the Afrikaans speaking community of Limpopo. This includes Agri-Limpopo, Transvaal Agricultural Union Northern region, the Afrikanerbond, the Union- Solidarity, NG Kerk, Reformed Church and various other Church groups.

Mr Gert Rall the former vice-president of Agri-Limpopo, who has recently been appointed the government liason person of this body, said the meeting was the second of its kind which Premier initiated. Several issues of concern were discussed during these highly positive meeting.

Rall further said that the meeting was in great spirit and that the Premier endeavours to bring about real reconciliation.

He thanked the Premier for his open door policy by allowing the opportunity for discussions and the fact that he listens to what the people have to say”

Honourable Speaker,

This House must take leaf from the courage shown by these leaders of the Afrikaans speaking community such as Dominee Gielie Joubert, Dominee Gert Kok of the NG kerk, Dr Fritz Kok of the ATKV, Dr Mostert of the Afrikanerbond and others who are unafraid to preach and practice true reconciliation in the manner they do. We extend an invitation to other South Africans including members of Opposition parties to emulate the

good example shown by these great patriots from the Afrikaans speaking community who are beginning to play a leading role in building a kind of South Africa that truly belongs to all, black and white.

It is not surprising that a common national consensus is emerging as the late President of the ANC envisaged in a speech delivered at the 1989 Lusaka conference between members of the Five Freedoms Forum (a group of white liberals) and the ANC. In that conference Oliver Tambo said:

“It is indeed our collective responsibility to rid our country of the cause of conflict, deprivation and disunity which has earned it the distaste of the rest of humanity. We are not an accursed people, singularly incapable of raising ourselves from the quagmire of racism and human degradation. Ours is a gifted and industrious society, with as yet untapped potential to offer humankind a towering example of non-racial unity based on the recognition of the rich tapestry of cultures that make up South Africa. We can and must do it!”

It is very encouraging that these visionary words of counsel and wisdom which were said by the President of the ANC, 17 years ago, can now find resonance amongst people who were regarded as architects or supporters of the grand Apartheid system, who at the time perceived him as their arch enemy. Despite these impressive achievements we have made thus far, there are still few within the Afrikaner and the white community in general who are mistaken to believe that they can derail this national effort of reconciliation and nation building. This has been illustrated by the provocative acts of disfiguring of the road sign posts with colours of the old flag and the offensive painting of our historical icons like the statue of Makhado. We strongly believe that they are mistaken as they are more and more becoming isolated because South Africans of goodwill have seen the importance of this national unity for the good of South Africa and her people.

Honourable Speaker

We are happy to report that a common consensus and shared vision of the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS) is emerging. The majority of the people of the Province are now acquainted and familiar with the contents and vision of this strategy and they seem more and more clearer about what needs to be done in order to develop this Province. In an assessment that was done by the Policy Unit in the Presidency, our Provincial Growth and Development Strategy has been found to be complying with the guidelines developed by the Presidency. Like we cautioned last year in our State of the Province address, the Presidency has equally shared the same concern about having a document which captures all the ingredients of how we should develop the Province if these ideals are not going to be realized. The greatest measure of its success solemnly lies in its implementation and its impact on the lives of the people. We have thus seen a great deal of enthusiasm amongst all the stakeholders championing the various aspects of the implementation of the strategy.

We have already started as part and parcel of the implementation of this strategy to develop project business plans for each of the seven cluster value chains. We have realized the need for shifting away from the general to the specifics. The process of appointing cluster value chain project managers is underway. The main responsibility for these managers would be to coordinate and manage this cluster value chain project on a daily basis. Equally, the need to streamline, redefine and refocus our Provincial Public entities (Parastatals) is becoming more and more apparent. This process would have to be concluded within the next six months.

Honourable Speaker

For the past three to four years the Province has been experiencing drought which had a severe impact on our agricultural capacity. It is not surprising that we have recorded a decline in the economic contribution of both agriculture and mining to our GDP (Gross Domestic Product). We have always held a view as a Province that water has a potential of undermining our Provincial Growth and Development Strategy.

There are great prospects of overcoming this constrain because the building of De Hoop dam has been approved through the national programme of ASGI-SA (Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa). It is envisaged that construction work will start from the 1st of April and the completion period is estimated to be in 2010. This intervention will go a long way in addressing the water needs for both domestic household consumption and industrial use in the whole of Greater Sekhukhune and beyond.

Like we have said before, many mining prospects in Tubatse area have been halted due to scarcity of water resources. Equally, we hope that the mining activities which were halted for the same reason in the area of Mokopane would soon be commencing now that the raising of Flag Boshielo dam has been completed and what is remaining is the building of a pipeline to Mokopane.

We hope that this intervention will go a long way in reversing the economic decline which was beginning to show in these two important sectors. Our effort of exploring the possibilities of beneficiation on various mineral resources is still being pursued. There are positive indications that the Waterberg Coal flagship project may be realized. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has gone a long way in doing feasibility study about the possible raising of Mokolo Dam which would definitely add more impetus to the realization of the Waterberg Coal flagship project.

Last year we talked about the possibility of establishing a Fresh Produce Market in the Province which is aimed at capturing both the domestic and regional market. We are delighted to announce that the feasibility studies have been concluded and a site has already been identified for this purpose. We trust that the construction work will soon commence in earnest. There is a significant amount of agro-processing operations going on in the Tzaneen area and government would continue to support this initiative. In this context, and as a measure of reinforcing this effort, we are engaging the Department of Water affairs and Forestry to speed up the possibility of the erection of the Nwamitwa dam.

The recent announcement by the President in the State of the Nation Address about the imminent review of the land policy could not have come at the right time. Like we have said in our Provincial land summit, the slow pace of the resolution of the land claims brings uncertainty and has the potential of drastically reducing the productive capacity of the agricultural sector. We hope and trust that this review process will finally resolve this impasse and bring stability to this sector. We would appeal to all stakeholders to take keen interest and actively participate in ensuring that this policy directive is realized for the sake of the country and its future.

Honourable Speaker

The other area in the agricultural sector we are giving attention and focus as part of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) is the support of small scale and subsistence farmers. Our aim is to enhance indigenous community assets that is, care of the livestock and encouragement of our communities to continue to till and cultivate their fields in the trust lands. Obviously this calls upon a better coordinated and improved agricultural extension services. We would expect that our agricultural extension officers would be better trained and competent enough to equal the task at hand.

Honorable Speaker,

It is however, worth mentioning that there are sectors that have registered a remarkable increase and thereby contributing to the growth and development of our economy. These include manufacturing, financial services, construction and tourism. Tourism industry is beginning to show significant growth despite the fact that we haven't as yet introduced new product offerings in this sector.

These developments signify the great tourism potential these Province can offer. Limpopo Tourism and Parks Board is seized with the responsibility of developing these new product offerings. We have in this context identified the Trans-Limpopo Frontier Parks as a springboard to the realization of this potential. Last year we have been engaged in serious discussions with the two Zimbabwean Provinces of Matebeleland North and South in order to give effect to the Trans-Limpopo development corridor.

The possible new product offering in this regard, would give a potential tourist an inclusive package of all the icons and tourism attractions from Makhado up to Victoria falls. This will obviously include the great Mapungubwe ruins, Thulamela, great Zimbabwe ruins to Victoria falls. The eastern front of Trans-Limpopo would include the exclusive game parks of Phalaborwa and Hoedspruit through the Gaza Province and the warm beaches of Maputo. This has been made possible by the opening of the Goriyondo border post through the Kruger National Park. It is said that driving through this route is shorter than driving from Johannesburg to Durban. The added beauty of this route is that you would be reconnecting with nature at its best. All of these efforts are in pursuit of our slogan of being the heartland of Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the fourth pillar of our Provincial Growth and Development Strategy which emphasizes regional integration.

Honourable Speaker

We have always prided ourselves of being the home and custodian of wildlife. We still play host to the natural scenic beauty and the abundance of the Big Five. Many of us do not know that in fact we are a home and host to the Big six. As contained in our corporate identity logo, the Baobab tree is a very important feature which distinguishes us from the rest of South Africa. You will be delighted to know that the Big Boabab tree in the province has been confirmed as the biggest in the world. The size of the tree is 39 metres wide, 24 metres high and over 300 hundred years old. We have instructed the Road Agency to tar the road to this Big tree and Tourism and Parks board to develop new product offerings around the Big tree in this part of our Province.

UNESCO had already declared Soutpansberg and Waterberg as biospheres. There are many other icons and national heritage sites which haven't as yet been developed to a satisfactory standard. A lot of work would still have to be done to bring them to an acceptable level. New product offerings would have to be developed around the Modjadji's royal palace, Makapane's valley, Nylsvlei and many others.

As a Province we hold a view that we have succeeded in managing the transition from Northern Province to Limpopo and everyone in the country now knows where Limpopo is and what it can offer. We think the next step in line with this above exposition is to now begin to promote the different Districts and Towns in the context of Brand Limpopo.

We have raised a concern last year in this House about the profile and prominence of MORIA City. We are delighted to note that this concern has been taken seriously particularly in the media fraternity. We have seen more and more positive coverage about the importance of this City and the role it is playing in the Province, both spiritually and economically. There have been enquiries and various proposals from many sectors on what can be done to pursue this endeavor. There is obviously room for further development of new product offerings in this regard which together with the Church, government would have to look at. There is obviously one other International Church, that is the United African Apostolic Church in the Nzhelele valley which would also have to be looked at in pursuit of raising the profile of the Province in SADC.

Last year we said that there was a need for the establishment of an International Convention Centre in Polokwane. We are delighted to report that the idea has generated too much interest and there are many stakeholders who are interested to be involved in this venture. Already, Polokwane Municipality is at an advanced stage in the process of rezoning land and has already received proposals for the building of a two hundred and fifty bed hotel. We see these developments as yet another opportunity to give impetus to our tourism potential.

We have since resolved many of the challenges which have been experienced in Polokwane International Airport around navigational devices. We have also succeeded in securing a bigger passenger plane which commutes between Polokwane and Johannesburg daily. GAAL (Gateway Airport Authority Limited) is now in the process of negotiating the possibility of a direct flight between Polokwane and Cape Town. There are also other very interesting and attractive proposals which are being pursued by the airport authority in relation to further development of the Airport for both passenger and cargo services.

During the Tourism Summit, we spoke a lot about the volume of traffic which passes through our province from countries north of our border particularly Zambia and Zimbabwe who continue to do their trade and business in Gauteng. We wondered as to what can be done to capture this market in order that the bulk of this trade is done in the Province taking into consideration our advantage of proximity to these countries. The idea of a regional shopping complex is gradually developing and it seems at though Polokwane is well poised to be the seat of this complex. Our Provincial Government would continue to support this sort of initiatives because they fit very well with our strategic objective of being the heartland of SADC and gateway to the rest of Africa.

Honourable Speaker

The work of upgrading Peter Mokaba Stadium to host the 2010 world soccer games has begun in earnest. The designs of building plans have already been completed and the construction work would be starting soon.

Honourable Speaker

For the past eight months government has been involved in the review of supply chain management in order to respond to our policy imperatives particularly around SMME development and Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). The new policy that has been rolled out from the beginning of this year is customized to meet the needs and challenges of the local SMME and BBBEE. We hold a view that the introduction of the new policy will fit very well with the broad policy objectives of Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGI-SA). The Policy directs supply chain management units of all departments to give priority to cooperatives and local suppliers.

Another important element of the policy is that if any service provider is engaged outside the Province that service provider is required to establish visible significance in terms of plant and staff which would be located in the Province. The policy equally directs government in line with Expanded Public Works policy provision to begin to source out its own supplies for hospitals, clinics, schools etc from local suppliers and cooperatives,

particularly in programmes like primary school feeding schemes and early childhood development (Crèches). We would like to call on big business and the corporate world to take leaf from government to ensure that SMME's are involved in the procurement of their own supplies.

We have noted a good example of the engagement of local producers and manufacturers like it is happening at the Thohoyandou Spar. The store is said to have opened its doors on 15 November 2002. Within ten months of its operation it had managed to capture 72% of the trade market share of the town with a monthly turn-over of R7.4 million whilst the other two competitors are trailing behind with only 28% market share. Currently the monthly turn-over is said to be over R15.million with a staff compliment of 450 members.

This is obviously unbelievable at a face value and everyone would wonder how such a remarkable achievement could have been recorded within such a short space of time. When the question was posed to management as to what the trick is, the answer was a simple one, that is, over and above investment in their workforce, the bulk of their stock is sourced locally. In the fruit and vegetable division, the only fruit which is sourced outside Vhembe District are apples from Ceres estate in Cape Town. The rest is "*local is lekker*". Management also claims that their in-store bakery and butchery generate the highest turn-over within their retail chain stores in the whole of South Africa, Botswana and Namibia.

The other trick which this management has mastered has been to empower and train the local producers on how they should improve the quality of their products. In this sense whilst Thohoyandou Spar management makes their profit, they also make a valuable contribution in the community by sourcing from local suppliers as well as skills transfer. We would like to encourage them to introduce new product lines of local products in other divisions beside food and vegetables. We are convinced that if all businesses in the province were to adopt the same model of buying local supplies and training local people, this would certainly go a long way in growing the economy and making a dent on poverty and unemployment.

We believe that this good example can serve as an excellent model of the envisaged Limpopo Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative. In his words Mr. Philip Snyman, the manager of Thohoyandou Spar argues that community involvement is much more than buying soccer jerseys for the local soccer team.

Honourable Speaker

Government has long announced the need for commercialization of about 54 State owned provincial game parks. The process is being delayed by land claims as the majorities of these parks were and are still under claims. We are delighted to note that some progress has been made and by the end of the year four of these game parks would have been successfully commercialized. Like we have said in the tourism summit, government's commercialization process would serve as a springboard for bringing the historically disadvantaged people into the tourism sector.

Honourable Speaker

The Provincial Government has been involved in the process of complying with the new National Transport Road Transition Act. This act provides that government should only play a regulatory role in the management of public transport. The Provincial Government is therefore obliged by this act to commercialize Great North Transport (GNT) bus fleet. We have been looking at the appropriate model of commercialization of this bus fleet. We are now in a position to announce that this commercialization process would be concluded by September this year. Obviously, again the emphasis in this commercialization would be on Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment

Honourable Speaker

In our effort to improve institutional effectiveness and efficiency of government we embarked on operation head count late last year, which has succeeded in exposing major weaknesses in our administration. Over and above government losing a lot of money in paying ghost employees, the following are some of the weaknesses which led to these deficiencies:

- Delays in terminations of deaths, retirements, transfers to other provinces, resignations, expiry of contracts etc
- General weaknesses in personnel management
- System-related deficiencies compounded by shortage of personnel who are well-trained in the management of both salary and financial systems.

The whole operation head count has saved government about R30 million and a directive was given to departments to attend to all cases individually and to develop appropriate sanctions for every human error or omission. Drawing from the lessons of this exercise, we have also decided to strengthen the human resource units in all departments, particularly in the personnel management and salaries sections who would be sufficiently trained and well-equipped with relevant skills to equal the task of updating our records. In some cases where there are clear indications of fraud and corruption, the cases have been referred to law enforcements agencies for further investigation and finalization while internal disciplinary processes are mooted out against concerned officials.

These deficiencies and weaknesses which have been unearthed by this exercise are not different from other weaknesses that government is constantly dealing with such as queries raised by the Office of the Auditor-General, SCOPA and other various Chapter Nine Institutions. We will continue to strive to improve in all these areas. We have already, in the same breath, had many interactions and engagements with most of the Chapter Nine Institutions in order to develop a common platform and understanding about obstacles and bottlenecks which continue to have a bearing on improving our reporting system. We are confident that a lot of progress has been made in this regard and we trust that there will be significant improvement in the reduction of the number of both qualified reports and matters of emphasis from the Auditor – General’s office.

Honourable Speaker

In response to the concerns raised last year in this House, about internal audit, legal services, asset management and risk management units which weren’t having the necessary capacity to discharge their functions that is early detection of weaknesses and

proactive action, we are delighted to report that staffing in these units has increased to equal the task at hand. Whilst these positive developments are acknowledged and appreciated, we are still faced with difficulties and challenges particularly with regard to the internal audit unit where there is high staff turn over. The majority of staff from this unit are being recruited by Municipalities in the province. We will continue to develop appropriate capacity to fast-track training through learnership and internships in order to ensure that capability of this unit to discharge its function is not compromised by this phenomenon of high staff turn-over.

Honourable Speaker

We would like once more to commend and appreciate the cooperation which we continue to enjoy from our Traditional Leaders in the Province. Their participation in various government programmes continues to give us more strength and courage in our developmental effort, particularly, in the rural areas where their role is most significant.

In line with the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act we have now enacted two provincial acts which regulate the affairs of Traditional authorities. The one act deals with the formation of local houses and the other one focuses on the transformation of Traditional authorities. An implementation plan for both these acts is in the process of being rolled out in collaboration with the Traditional leaders. The implementation of these acts will go a long way in addressing some of the problems that these Traditional authorities have been confronted with.

At last, the Nhlapho Commission which has been appointed to deal with claims and disputes of Traditional Leadership has begun its work in earnest. We have already witnessed the holding of two sessions in Vhembe and Sekhukhune about these claims and disputes. The amount of work covered thus far, gives us hope that the outstanding claims and disputes will be amicably resolved sooner than anticipated.

Last year in our State of the Province address we indicated that we are suppose to be appointing 1772 Headmen in the province. As of now the number of all appointed

Headmen who are already being remunerated by this government is 1888 and we think that we have covered all eligible Headmen in the Province.

Honourable Speaker

The commitment we made last year of pursuing creative and innovative ways of improving the financial, administrative and service delivery capacity of our Municipalities has gained the required momentum. Through the Premier-Mayor's Forum, we have succeeded in pursuing all these stated objectives and we are delighted to announce that in this financial year 75% of our Municipalities were able to prepare and table their multi-year budgets within the stipulated timeframes as compared to only 50% in the previous financial year, 68% submitted their annual financial statements to the Office of the Auditor-General as compared to only 31% in the previous financial year and 61% of our Municipalities compiled their annual financial statements in-house compared to 31% in the previous year. This state of affairs serves as an indication that there is improved financial administration in majority of our Municipalities and dependence on consultants to prepare annual financial statements is gradually diminishing. Late, last year we have allocated R200 million for drought relief, water provision and electricity. We are convinced that this intervention will go a long way in responding to the direct needs of our people as a measure of reducing the backlog in basic services.

Honourable Speaker

We have recently convened district-wide IDP consultative meetings in all our District Municipalities. This process seeks to ensure integrated and coordinated planning framework for both the Province and Municipalities. It has come out of these reviews that a lot still has to be done in relation to the capacity of government in general, particularly in Municipalities. The areas which need more focused attention include Forward planning for basic services, Local Economic Development (LED), town planning and land use management. If this lessons and experience is anything to go by, Government should in this coming financial year, dedicate more resources in all these areas in order to enable new councils to equal the task.

Honourable Speaker

Government continues to take seriously allegations of corruption and nepotism in the allocation of housing. As promised in our previous State of the Province Address, corrective action has been taken against those found to be involved in corrupt activities relating to the allocation of houses. The Task team appointed last year to investigate this malady made a number of recommendations which we are being implemented.

In pursuance of some of the recommendations, we have since expelled officials who defrauded government and their cases have been handed over to the courts. Contractors who have been found to be involved in defrauding government have also been handed over to the law enforcement agencies in line with the recommendations of the Task Team. Our position still remains in relation to both service providers and contractors who do business with government but still continue to exploit their employees. If such service providers and contractors are known and brought to our attention, they would be blacklisted and their services or contracts will be terminated forthwith. We will continue to spare no effort, nor strength, to fight corruption with all its ramifications both in the Public service and the private sector.

Honourable Speaker

Our road upgrading and tarring programme is proceeding very well. We intend maintaining the current funding levels and continue to explore possibilities of increasing it. Given this commitment one is certain that we will reach our target of making sure that one doesn't have to travel more than 10km before reaching a tarred road, in ten years or even shorter period. Our commitment in this regard is unquestionable.

Honourable Speaker

Access to social security has improved drastically and we are confident that all beneficiaries who qualify for various social security grants are now receiving them. The total number of beneficiaries receiving social security grants in the province is about 1.1 million. Those who are receiving old age pensions are 300 000.

Those who are receiving child support grants are 700 000, whilst those receiving permanent disability grants are 96 000. Our major concern remains the question of the integrity of this system and whether all the people who are receiving these grants do indeed qualify.

Honourable Speaker

During this coming financial year, 18 District Hospitals will expand their outreach programme through doctors' visits to primary health care centres. Plans are underway to recruit more medical specialists for Provincial hospitals and the Pietersburg / Mankweng tertiary Health complex. The establishment of a medical faculty in the Province will further enhance our tertiary health services capacity.

Honourable Speaker

We have noted that our HIV and AIDS prevalence rate is lower than that of other provinces but however the infection rate remains higher. The prevalence rate of Limpopo at the moment is at 19.3% compared to the national rate of 29.5%. While our prevalence rate is seen as lower in contrast to other Provinces, there are however strong indications that infection rates are on the increase. With exception of Sekhukhune district which has seen a slight drop of 13.4% from the previous 14.1%, all the other Districts have registered steady increases. Statistics are showing that the age group of between 25 to 29 years is proving to be the one most vulnerable to new infections. We know these are mainly young people who are at tertiary institutions and in the workforce. It is a worrying fact that the loss of this young people would certainly have a negative effect on the economic stability of our country. We call on the youth of our province to heed the call of the ABC message which is Abstinence, Being faithful, or usage of condoms.

We are nonetheless pleased that the Province has increased the number of sites from 08 to 20 District hospital facilities which are accredited to provide the Comprehensive HIV and AIDS treatment.

Honourable Speaker

The Province has not been performing well in the infrastructural provision particularly on conditional grants. Our spending levels remain very low in this area. The major weakness which resulted in this situation has been due to poor planning and delays in the adjudication and awarding of tenders to the service providers.

Honourable Speaker

We have corrected this anomaly by ensuring that all the business plans are ready before the commencement of the new financial year. We have also directed that every department which takes more than three weeks to finalize the adjudication process must account for the delay.

The Department of Education is making an impressive record in dealing with the classroom backlog which is existing in the Province. In this financial year, 279 classrooms are being built in order to accommodate learners under trees and those who are studying in shacks. In the areas where this process of building classrooms has been slow, mobile classrooms are being provided. From August last year the Province has already provided 116 mobile classrooms in areas where there has been an urgent need. It is also delighting to note that a plant for manufacturing these mobile classrooms has been set up in Polokwane and has since developed the capacity to produce four mobile classrooms per day.

Honourable Speaker

As we pointed out last year in this House, the challenge of overcrowding which is largely driven by the quest from learners to go to better performing schools will remain with us for some time to come. We hope that the interventions which are being made to improve the management of schools and inculcation of a culture of learning and teaching remain the long lasting solution to this phenomenon. This is largely a human element which must be corrected.

Honourable Speaker

A national policy decision has been taken to exempt schools that are located in poorer areas from paying school fees. In our Province this would cover about 2300 schools and over a million learners would benefit from these intervention. We take it that this intervention will go a long way in relieving poorer households and parents from the burden of paying schools fees and therefore improving school attendance.

It is also encouraging to note that the persistent problem of temporary teachers which characterized the reopening of our schools has finally been resolved. By the 1st of April this year, 8661 temporary teachers would be appointed permanently. We hope and trust that the absorption of these teachers will help in stabilizing and strengthening the culture of learning and teaching in our schools and thus improving the general performance of our education system. Our expectation with this intervention in education is to ensure that we continue to improve the quality of our Matric results and also reverse the decline that we have experienced last year.

Honourable Speaker

We have been observing and following the debates regarding the school language policy with keen interest. As government we remain committed to ensuring that all languages are promoted and developed in line with our constitution. We trust that the continuing debate of language policy will not undermine this fundamental constitutional principle.

We will continue to hold a belief that a good education will depend on a strong foundation and therefore a need for a comprehensive early childhood development cannot be overemphasized. In the context of the EPWP in the social sector, the social cluster will be giving more attention to this programme. The other priority programme which should also be given sufficient attention is Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET).

Honourable Speaker

We have intimated in this house last year that our Provincial Growth and Development Strategy places a high premium on skills development. As part and parcel of the realization of the objective of our Provincial Human Resource Development Strategy and ASGI-SA, the issue of skills in all sectors of the economy becomes paramount. The FET Summit which was convened last year confirmed our assertion about the need for various skills in the Province particularly in the areas of our competitive advantages, such as mining, agriculture, tourism, research and development. We note with appreciation the fact that money has been set aside for the recapitalization of FET colleges.

We hope and trust that this intervention will go a long way in galvanizing the training effort of various sectors and will largely benefit the youth of our country. We cannot agree more with the call made by the President for a well coordinated massive National Youth Service. We think this intervention will also assist our young people to develop critical life skills and a sense of responsibility and discipline.

Honourable Speaker

In keeping with our commitment of honouring our historical warrior Kings, to this end we have erected and unveiled the statues of King Makhado and Nghunghunyane. As part and parcel of the preservation of our own history and culture and a better understanding of where we come from, it may even be necessary to have a better record of all sorts of resistance struggles which were waged in various parts of the Province. Many of these struggles are not properly recorded and we rely solely on oral history. With the passage of time, this important historical account of our Province will face the threat of fading away.

Honourable Speaker

Many of us in this chamber may not be familiar with the resistance struggles waged by the people of Matlala - a - Thaba. Historians like Tlou Setumu who has made a series of

historical account of many Traditional Leaderships in the Province must be encouraged to continue with the good work they are doing. We understand that he would be launching the first series of his books next week on Thursday the 16th. We would like to believe that the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture would take keen interest in this type of work and therefore support such initiatives.

Mapungubwe Arts Festival continues to serve as a component part of brand Limpopo strategy. As a measure of improving on the successes of these event there might be a need to refocus and strengthen the international outlook of the event, particularly in increasing the participation of artists in SADC and the continent.

Honourable Speaker

The Department of Safety and Security has held a successful crime summit which has come up with a Provincial Crime Prevention Strategy. We hope and trust that the department will continue to implement all the crucial elements contained in the strategy.

Honourable Speaker

Last year we spoke about the increasing levels of temptations for people to live beyond their means which lead to all sorts of social problems. The one thing that we normally overlook which further complicates the situation is gambling. Many of our people spent their money on gambling of various sorts like lotto, *fahfee (Mchina)*, casino, cards and dices etc. Obviously all of these sorts of gambling are played across various social strata. The upper social strata would be involved in those that are legal like; lotto and casino, whilst the poor would be predominately involved in the illegal ones like dices, *fahfee (Mchina)* and others.

We have constantly been receiving complaints about the abuse of social security grants like old age pension, disability and child support grants. In many instances if this abuse is not related to the unscrupulous activities of “Machonisas” it would involve these sorts of gambling like *fahfee (Mchina)* cards and dices. It is unbelievable to note that some of these illegal gambling particularly, (*Mchina*) would have a turnover of about R14.000 per

operator a day on a single route which would translate to R15.2 million per month. If this was a community investment scheme in which the resources are channeled into a credible community reinvestment scheme like a cooperative, it could serve as a better way of enhancing community capital accumulation which could then be redirected to the general upliftment of the very community. It is claimed that these activities and the turnover increase around the time of the payment of social security grants. If this is true, then government's effort of relieving the plight of the poor with social security grants gets undermined because the poverty status of the beneficiaries is worsened.

Gambling on its own is not a problem but too much of it can be dangerous because of its addictive nature. All of the people who get involved in gambling are driven by this desire to get rich quickly and aspire to lead affluent lifestyles which they cannot afford as we referred to this matter last year. There is a need for a massive campaign that is aimed at educating people about the dangers of gambling. This campaign should involve the moral regeneration movement, business, labour and all organs of civil society concerned about the restoration of the moral fibre of our society.

Honourable Speaker

We cannot conclude this address without acknowledging luminaries from the Province who have continued to carry the provincial flag sky high. These are sons and daughters of the Province who continue to make us proud as they continue to excel in the world of sports, corporate, Public sector and showbiz. Though the list is not conclusive, allow me to pay homage to the following stars from the province:

- Polokwane's Retief Goosen, World Number 4 Golf Champion, also a brand Limpopo ambassador, who continues to win numerous golf championships both at home and abroad,
- Malamulele's Isaac Hlatshwayo who has just been voted the 2005 South African Boxer of the Year,
- Mrs. Ntswaki Qwabe of Ga-Mathabatha for scooping the Sowetan-Old Mutual 2005 Community builder of the year.

- Seshego's Eric Macheru for winning the national "Sokka King" championship,
- Department of Safety, Security and Liaison won the national Impumelelo award for being the best innovative public service institution in the country,
- Phalaborwa Municipality for turning Phalaborwa into the cleanest city in the country,
- The councilors of Capricorn District Municipality for being counted the second best in the Z.K Matthews award for the best performing group of ANC councilors
- Thulamela Municipality for winning the 2005 Impumelelo award for community involvement programme.

We also like to formally congratulate Mr. Serobi Maja, the Chief Executive Officer of our Provincial Gambling Board on his recent election to the Executive Committee of the International Association of Gambling Regulators.

In the same breath we also wish to congratulate two outstanding Limpopo farmers who have done us proud by representing South Africa in this year's internationally renowned event of Fruit Logistica Exhibition in Germany. The two farmers are Mrs. Cynthia Legodi, a potato farmer from Elandskraal and Mr. Jameson Nesane, a tomato farmer from Musina. These two ambassadors of the Province are truly a shining example of what other emerging farmers can achieve on the national and international stage.

Last year, we also witnessed the bestowal of the prestigious National Orders of Luthuli on two distinguished gallant fighters of Limpopo, who are comrades Lawrence Madimetja Phokanoka and Flag Boshielo. Their names would forever remain engraved in the archival monuments of our Province and South Africa as a whole.

Honourable Speaker

As a gesture a goodwill and a sign that our collective efforts are indeed bearing fruit, we were invited to the Ndebele Traditional Authority under Inkosi Maphepha II of Monsterlos to join them in their celebration of service delivery achievements. Their invitation letter reads as follows:

“The Ndebele Traditional Authority has decided to have a celebration on the 12th of August 2005 at Inkosi Maphepha II’s kraal. The celebration is aimed at thanking the Limpopo government for a number of services delivered in the area. It is also aimed at congratulating the Premier and his executive council for uniting the people of the Province in their diversity and making this Province a home for us all.”

We derive more strength and energy out of these invaluable words of inspiration and courage, and this can only serve to renew our sense of commitment and loyalty to the cause of making Limpopo a home for all its citizens, Black and white. We are confident that these words of wisdom and counsel are a totality of the reflection of the general feeling of all Traditional Leaders and people of our Province. The introduction of Community Development Workers (CDW) will go a long way in enhancing and perfecting our outreach and community involvement programme. We are indeed humbled by the fact that we have got this strong backing from our people in our endeavor to develop this Province. In one of the meeting of *Ndzalama ya Vuhosi*, Hosi Mhlava of the Bankuna Traditional Authority expressed the same feeling when he said that in this Province:

“We are all impressed and very optimistic about our future under an ANC led government”. Hinkweru hi tsakile nakambe hi ni ku tshemba eka vurhangeri bya mfumo lowu rhangeriweke hi ANC.

We hope and trust that this spirit of unity and togetherness will again be shown on the 1st of March when we go to the polls for the renewal of the mandate of our Municipal councils.

Inkomu!!