**State of the Province Address by Mr Sello Moloto, the Premier of Limpopo, to the second sitting of the Third Democratic Legislature of Limpopo**

17 February 2005

Mr Speaker and Deputy Speaker,
Honourable members of the 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,
Our esteemed Majesties and Your Royal Highnesses present,
Former MPs and MPLs,
Our Director General and the senior management of our administration
Leadership of Chapter Institutions
Leadership of ANC and other political organisations,
Stalwarts and Veterans of our struggle,
Leadership of various religious denominations,
Youth, Women, Business, Labour and Community leaders present here,
Media representatives,
Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,
The people of Limpopo.

As we bid farewell to the past decade of freedom and democracy and confidently traverse through the beginning of the second decade, the challenges and strains that will eventually define our triumph remain real. The historical burden bestowed on us by our forebears has not fully disappeared. The quest for humanity to be delivered from hunger, ignorance and despair is yet to be fulfilled. However, we find solace and inspiration in knowing that humanity will always conquer.

It is widely acknowledged that ours is a province of warriors who stay determined and relentless despite odds. Amongst us we can count cadres of our movement who are part of the generation that gave birth to the Freedom Charter which we are celebrating its 50th anniversary. These cadres include John Kgwana Nkadimeng, Lawrence Phokanoka, TT Cholo and Ike Maphoto who were instrumental in the founding of both the South African Congress of Trade Unions and Umkhontho we Sizwe. We also honour and pay homage to those of our stalwarts who continued to advance the ideals of our movement through involvement in the underground and various organs of people’s power. These veterans some of whom are amongst us in this chamber include cadres such as Samson Ndou, Pharephare Mothupi, Nelson Diale, Mahwidi Phala and Rashaka Ratshitanga.

These outstanding leaders of our people never compromised in principle and got deterred in their commitment to fight for a just cause. They live amongst us as torchbearers and their deeds continue to inspire us as we struggle to improve and better the living conditions of our people.

Mr Speaker

Just two months ago, the community of Thulamela Municipality was recognised by the Minister of Provincial and Local Government for being exemplary in complementing government in its delivery of social services. Through partnership with the municipality the community has made us proud by scooping the Vuna Special Performance Excellence Award. They proved that communities in dire straits can be able to access basic services such as electricity without having to be constrained by projected timelines.

Shouldering the responsibility for their own development, in partnership with organs of the state, and defying the helplessness characteristic of those who wait for delivery of services only from the state, the people of Thulamela came together as a collective in the true spirit of Letšema and Vuk’uzenzele to aid their Municipality in the speedy delivery of electricity. Ten villages contributed about R4.2 million, and the Municipality contributed the remaining amount. As we speak today the electrification programme in these villages has been completed. The other group of eight villages has already contributed about R660 000 and the electrification process is due to be completed before the end of this financial year.

These communities understood that they cannot only be passive recipients of government services without active involvement. They clearly understand that the reconstruction and development of this country require their active participation. They obviously take cue from and advance the legacy of our forebearers and legends from this part of our country like warrior King Makhado, Phiriphiri Rasimphi Tshivhase, and a community leader and activist Alpheus Malivha who steadfastly and selflessly stood in defence of their birth right and commitment to the realisation of a better life for all.

We therefore would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the communities in Thulamela Municipality. We hope and trust that this sense of community spirit and voluntarism which is prevailing in these communities would spread throughout the Province. We call upon all Municipalities in the Province and councillors in particular, to emulate this example of community participation and involvement in the delivery of services. Clearly this kind of initiative resonates with the letter and spirit of the Freedom Charter when it says, “the people shall govern”.

Mr Speaker

True to their nature and character of the people of Limpopo, that of being resilient, steadfast and always striving for excellence, the people of Limpopo have spent most of the past nine months engaged in a concerted effort and process to redefine and clarify their development goals and objectives.

In all the strategic breakaways and sectoral summits you have dedicated more time in refocusing and redefining our development path through drawing on our important lessons from our past decade of freedom and democracy.

What emerged out of these elaborate and deeply intense consultative process was that you the people of the province have identified your priorities as follows:

1. You reaffirmed that development is about people and therefore comfortable with a people-driven and people-centred development process in order to improve the quality of your lives.
2. You said that there is a need to grow the economy in order to enhance the fight against poverty and create work.
3. You have said that there is a need for the building of institutional capacity and efficiency in order to enhance innovation and competitiveness in service delivery.
4. You have also said that there is a need for both social and economic regional integration in order to give effect to our strategic location as the heartland of SADC and gateway to the rest of Africa.
5. You have said that we must continue to give attention to priority programmes like HIV and AIDS, Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, Small Medium and Micro Enterprise development including a better and improved implementation of Local Economic Development programmes.

Mr Speaker

In October last year we adopted a new Provincial Growth and Development Strategy. The distinguishing feature of this strategy is anchored around the need for integration and clustering of projects or programmes. This approach is informed by the fact that development is multifaceted and recognises the urgency for convergence of all developmental plans by all spheres of government. Our strategy correctly identifies the need to establish working groups comprising business, labour and government at all levels including municipalities in each of the cluster value chains.

There is obviously a need to build a requisite infrastructure including provision of water, transport, electricity and appropriate information technology in order to improve integration, productivity and competitiveness within and across all the clusters. Our strategy also places a big premium on the need for proper research and development capacity within each cluster in order to maximise and promote new product opportunity development aimed at enhancing competitiveness and innovation within each cluster.

One major threat which has the potential to undermine and derail all of our efforts and endeavour to implement the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy, which emerged from both the sectoral summits and various interactions with all the stakeholders is the availability of appropriate and competent skills with the relevant capacity to implement this strategy. The Province has subsequently developed a human resource development strategy, which is an elaborate plan on how we are to tackle this potential obstacle. We envisage a more coherent and inclusive programme as we build adequate human resources for the future.

Mr Speaker

The Provincial Growth and Development Strategy endorsed the seven major elements of the national mining charter. i.e.

\* The need for local procurement, particularly the non-core mining operations. These will include services such as security provision, gardening or landscaping, transportation, catering, cleaning and vending. These are the minimum services that should be provided by local people. It has to be emphasised that local people should not only be engaged as workers in the provision of these services, but also as owners and directors of the companies responsible.

\* Human Resource Development – The mining houses should develop human resource capacity for both their employees, unemployed youth and learners through provision of training opportunities in programmes like learnerships and internships. As part of their social upliftment programmes, students should also be assisted with bursaries.

\* Community Development – The common concerns of many communities around many mines have always been the increasing number of informal settlements, increasing levels of crime, health hazards like cracking houses, air and water pollution and increasing incidences of HIV and AIDS. The mining houses should obviously take keen interest in these matters in the spirit of good neighbourliness through their community development programmes.

\* Beneficiation – It has been established that the labour absorption capacity of mining is very limited. There is a growing sense of a need to improve the value chain of our mining investments downstream in order to increase the capacity of this industry to create jobs. This can only be achieved if the mining companies are encouraged to be involved in the local beneficiation of their primary commodities.

\* Research and Exploration – Our province has a great potential in mining. We are envisaging an increase in further investment in this sector due to the fact that the charter provides for incentives in research and exploration. We hope that continued research will provide solutions to even the challenges of beneficiation that we are facing.

\* Ownership equity targets – We are equally envisaging a through-going transformation of the sector and entrance of the new players through the implementation of ownership equity targets. This will obviously happen within the context of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment framework.

\* Employment equity targets – The mining sector is also required to comply with labour relations regime of our country, particularly in terms of employment equity, safety and environment. As a province, given our experience with the problem of Asbestosis in Penge and Mafefe, we take a particular interest in issues of mining safety and management of the environment. Similarly, we are particularly worried about the possibility of a threat of water pollution and earth cracks in Phalaborwa. The necessary interventions will be made to avoid such a disaster.

Mr Speaker

The emotive dimension of land claims is identified in our Provincial Growth and Development Strategy as an issue that requires priority attention. There is a need for a balanced approach in order to retain and even improve productivity as we proceed to address the problem of land hunger through our Land redistribution process. Viable and less expensive models that provide win-win solutions for all the stakeholders involved in the dispute should therefore be found and pursued. The other issue which is receiving our priority attention is the security of both farmers and farm workers.

The issue of food security and support for both subsistence and emerging farmers should be incorporated into the agriculture cluster value chain. Rural feeder roads should also receive priority attention within a cluster context in order to facilitate access to markets.

The Province has got a high potential for downstream agro-processing investment opportunities. We produce 45% of citrus, 57% of macadamia, 60% of tomatoes and 70% of mangoes of South African market. Trade and Investment Limpopo is facilitating the process of enhancing this potential of the agro-processing industry. On the other hand, Provincial Government is pursuing the process of establishing a Fresh Produce Market, which is aimed at capturing even the SADC market.

Mr Speaker

We have said in many forums that our tourism promotion strategy has always been focussing on the outside world, particularly Europe. There is a need for our strategy to embrace a stronger domestic content and regional focus in order to reaffirm our status of being the heartland of SADC and a gateway to Africa. We have argued for a stronger assertion and the necessary prominence to be given to MORIA City and the annual ZCC pilgrimage like it is done and happens with MECCA of Saudi Arabia and the Vatican City of Rome.

Mr Speaker

Our plans to build an International Convention Centre in Polokwane are at an advanced stage. The Limpopo Provincial Government has, in collaboration with Polokwane Municipality, concluded a feasibility study on the International Convention Centre. The feasibility study has confirmed that, what is needed is a middle size, high tech centre with a post-modernist African look and feel. We are in this regard partnering with the Durban International Convention Centre who are assisting and providing us with support in drawing the architectural design, marketing and operational plans.

The idea of bidding for the seat of the Pan African Parliament is taking root and receiving overwhelming support. All political parties, business and various organs of civil society in the province have come out in support of this initiative. The provincial government will continue to engage the relevant stakeholders and other provinces for the ultimate realisation of this initiative.

Mr Speaker

Our Expanded Public Works Programme is beginning to take shape. We are now at the stage where the programme is extended to municipalities. As a measure of expanding this programme and responding adequately to the issue of poverty and unemployment, we have recommitted ourselves that all developmental programmes of government at all levels should employ labour intensive methods.

A drawback which we have observed with this programme has been the fact that contractors and/or suppliers which we are engaging are not adequately adhering to the principles of this programme.

The programme is also undermined by the fact that there are delays in the payment of workers and in certain instances there is underpayment or non-payment of workers at all. Government is equally not exonerated in this tendency because of the delays in the payment of contractors.

We therefore recommit ourselves to ensuring that the payment cycle in government remains within thirty days. As we correct weaknesses on the government side, we will not tolerate any contractor/supplier who does business with government and continue to exploit workers.

Mr Speaker

The third objective of our Provincial Growth and Development Strategy is the building of a clean, efficient and effective government. Like it has always been consistently raised by President Thabo Mbeki, the issue of capacity within the public service to implement government policies and programmes requires constant monitoring and evaluation.

Despite our impressive record of service delivery achievements and transformation endeavours since the inception of our democratic government, there are persistent weaknesses and deficiencies within our public administration. Amongst the major concerns is the outcry about allegations of graft and corruption within the public service. The Auditor-General’s reports tacitly allude to these allegations. The reports point out the disturbing fact that government procures goods and services at prices far above the market value, i.e. sometimes tender prices are inflated more than five times the actual value. In some instances government pays for the same service more than once, i.e. there are instances of multiple payments occurring.

Government’s immediate response to this challenge was the decentralisation of procurement services to respective departments as announced last year. This was meant to make the HODs or accounting officers to take direct responsibility for the funds appropriated in their departments. Departments have also been directed to implement the new policy on supply chain management. Given the concerns raised in both the Auditor-General and SCOPA reports, departments have further been directed to develop guidelines that are aimed at establishing acceptable benchmarks in order to curb this tendency of inflated tender prices. It is expected that these guidelines should have been completed in the next three months. The Executive Council has also taken a decision directing the executing authorities (i.e. MECs) to take keen interest in ensuring that all queries raised by the Auditor-General are attended to and quarterly reports are presented to the Executive Council in order to ensure that proactive measures aimed at avoiding the recurrences of this tendency are taken.

We have also provided adequate internal administrative systems that are meant to deal with the challenges stated above. These units will include the internal audit and risk management units whose aim is to provide the necessary checks and balances.

The focus for this year is to ensure that adequate capacity for these units is provided to achieve the purpose they are created for, i.e. early detection of defaults and weaknesses in our administrative system. It is government’s responsibility to continue to strengthen these units and streamline their activities in order to allow for sharing of expertise, knowledge and experience, particularly at the level of Municipalities.

Mr Speaker

Without running the risk of overstating the obvious, we have said last year in this house that in any corrupt activity, there is always more than one party involved. This will then mean that the battle against this malaise cannot be won from only one front. The cooperation and determination from the other party is required i.e. the need for business to help us root out this anti-people tendency cannot be overemphasised.

The other area that requires government’s urgent attention is the issue of contract management. Government continues to lose many cases in court due to this weakness. We are currently considering various ways of strengthening our legal services in order to be able to adequately respond to this challenge.

As government, we are equally concerned about the level of theft, pilferage and wastage that is taking place in many of our government institutions like government offices, schools, hospitals and clinics. Despite the fact that we have provided security in most of these institutions, we still lose valuable items like computers, linen, medicines, and groceries from our hospitals. Most of the classrooms in our schools are without chairs and tables. We expect that within six months, government should have developed an elaborate plan on how both the security and asset management plans are improved in order to curb this tendency. We call on all organs of civil society, be it labour, business, churches and community-based organisations to assist us in bringing this wastage to an end. We say so because in many instances the culprits are known within our communities. Government’s efforts to provide security and improved asset management will come to naught if there is no co-operation from the community.

Mr Speaker

Social security grants remain one of the most direct poverty alleviation interventions in our communities. We are disturbed by unscrupulous elements who continue to undermine this intervention by abusing and accessing these grants illegally.

The national Department of Social Development has even begun an indemnity process for culprits who would like to freely come out to declare their illegal receipt of the grants. We would want to reiterate this call by appealing to people to come forward so that funds recovered could be directed to other areas of need. All South Africans of goodwill must come forward to blow the whistle on these fraudsters.

In this regard government is convening the provincial anti-corruption summit on the 17th of March as a build-up to the national one announced by the President. The convening of this summit will go a long way in building a strong partnership in dealing with graft and impropriety both in the public and private sectors.

Mr Speaker

The Planning and Coordination Unit in the Office of the Premier is beginning to take shape and it is aimed at integrating all our planning processes. We can confidently say, at this stage, that our planning endeavours are beginning to show signs of integration at all levels, i.e. our IDPs in municipalities are beginning to contribute to the realisation of our Provincial Growth and Development Strategy.

The area in which we are found wanting is that of monitoring and evaluation, hence the inability to determine the impact of our policies and programmes.

We have already put in place measures to strengthen our Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. We have also advertised vacant posts in this Unit and our expectation is that the incumbents will commence work within the next two months.

Mr Speaker

When we opened this house nine months ago, we undertook to recognise and start remunerating all Headmen in the Province. In keeping with this commitment, today we are happy to announce that out of the total number of 1742 Headmen who were supposed to be appointed, 1646 have now been appointed. The appointment of the remaining 96 will be finalised before the end of March.

Mr Speaker

Last year we went through a very successful traditional circumcision season. Disputes were very minimal and we have seen a significant reduction on fatalities in this regard. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders, particularly Kgoshi Setlamorago Thobejane, the provincial House of Traditional leaders and CONTRALESA who were in the forefront of ensuring that we record this remarkable success.

The provincial House of Traditional Leaders is in the process of organising a conference before the commencement of the next traditional circumcision season.

Mr Speaker

In our assessment of service delivery through travelling the length and breadth of the province, engaging in such outreach programmes as Executive Council Meets the People, Batho-Pele Roadshows and Government IMBIZOs we have discovered that issues that are commonly raised by our people include lack of roads, water, electricity, and shabby treatment by public servants in various service delivery institutions. We acknowledge these challenges and are doing everything in our power to improve the situation.

With regard to electricity, the process has indeed been painstakingly slow and our people’s patience is gradually waning, as it cannot be unlimited. We have however been engaging ESKOM and the Department of Minerals and Energy in order to resolve the impasse of capacity and other weaknesses in the electrification programme.

Mr Speaker

When it comes to water provision, it must be noted that due to the unfavourable climatic conditions of our province, a dire need exists for all of us to use water sparingly. Whilst we would be continuing to provide reticulation from ground water, we believe that the long-term and lasting solution to this problem is the building of more dams in the province. In the meantime, we call upon our people to recommit themselves to the efficient utilisation and conservation of water.

We are convening a Water Summit next week on the 21st of February, to interrogate in more detail, the challenges of water provision and find an adequate response to the need for a better and efficient water harvesting and conservation methods, given our otherwise dry and rain-starved weather and geographic location.

Mr Speaker

Government is involved in a process of looking at the manner in which it is structured. This is aimed at reducing bureaucracy, increasing capacity of public service at service points and, more importantly, improve its responsiveness to the needs of our people. We are in the process of rationalising district offices in order to build capacity closest to the people. This initiative is taken in order to advance and realise the principles of Batho-Pele that government cherishes.

Mr Speaker

Our inter-governmental relations programme has been faced with the challenges of our municipalities. The Premier-Mayor’s Forum continues to pursue creative and innovative ways of improving the financial, administrative and service delivery capacity of our municipalities.

The majority of our municipalities have succeeded in establishing ward committees throughout the province. There is a need for us to strengthen these structures in order to bridge the gap between government planning and programmes implementation on the one hand, and community involvement on the other hand. The daunting task of provision of free basic services can only be completed through partnerships and cooperation of all stakeholders. This will immensely contribute towards improving the credibility and integrity of our planning processes; i.e. Integrated Development Plans and Local Economic Development projects.

We hope and trust that the nationally led Project Consolidate will assist us in making our municipalities equal the task of service delivery imperatives, particularly in the area of project planning and implementation, financial management and revenue generation.

The other area which our municipalities should focus on is the town planning responsibilities and land use challenges. We would like to contend that it may well be that our towns are in the state in which they are partly because of the fact that there is no greater attention given to the town planning challenges.

Mr Speaker

We have noted that despite the remarkable achievements we have made in housing delivery since 1994, government is still confronted with general concerns around such matters as allegations of corruption and nepotism in the allocation of houses, utilisation of these houses for purposes unintended, illegal disposal of these properties, building of sub-standard or poor quality houses by unscrupulous developers.

Government is surely determined to see an end to these mal-practices, hence we call upon everybody to report these illegal activities to authorities wherever they happen. As you will be aware, we will continue to act on the allegations made against government officials and developers implicated in the housing corruption scams. We are glad that the Task Team appointed to investigate this matter is making substantial progress and we are confident that the findings will help us correct whatever weaknesses identified.

Mr Speaker

We have finally found an appropriate identity, which is grounded in our rich history and cultural heritage. The Mapungubwe Arts Festival which was launched late last year was indeed a resounding success that showcased many of Limpopo’s talents and succeeded in attracting the best artists from all over South Africa and the continent. This festival has clearly put Limpopo on the arts and cultural map of our continent. We are confident that future events would even be much better and bigger.

Mr Speaker

Consistent with the historical journey we undertook a decade ago, this government is continuing with efforts to reclaim and assert the pride of its people and their heritage as a free nation. When we began our term last year we committed ourselves to celebrate the lives and honour the spirits of our historical icons. These are represented by our warrior kings such as Sekhukhune 1, Tshilwavhusiku Makhado and Nghunghunyane. To this end we have constructed and unveiled the statue of King Sekhukhune I in Tjate and are on course with the building of the statues of Makhado and Nghunghunyane before the end of this year.

Mr Speaker

Our Arrive Alive Campaign message is beginning to bear the required results. This is evidenced by significant reduction in accidents and fatalities on our roads. In the last festive season, we have seen a decline of about 20% in fatalities on our roads from the previous one.

We have also identified the need for intense mass education and awareness campaign to the general public as there seems not to be the same decline in pedestrian accidents. We are considering extending the road safety campaign to schools and related institutions. It is therefore befitting to take this opportunity to salute and congratulate our men and women in uniform from all law enforcement agencies for the sterling work done.

Once more, the international community will be converging in our province as we will be hosting the International Transport Convention in May this year. Clearly this is once again an expression of confidence by the international community in our country and the province.

Mr Speaker

Our Province is renowned for tranquillity and being at peace with itself, hence it is being dubbed the “Home of peace”. It is in this context that we have over the years thought that we have won the battle over ritual killings, racial and witchcraft related crimes. The recent emergence and resurgence of these types of heinous crimes in the past weeks and months is a source of great concern to us. We have learned through experience that witch-hunt violence and suspicions of witchcraft are the cause of instability in our communities. We call on all our communities not to take the law into their own hands as only the South African Police Service and other law enforcement agencies have the capacity and authority to deal with such matters.

The other worrying phenomenon gripping our Province is the increasing levels of domestic violence and suicides. One of the major contributing factors to these incidences stems from increasing levels of consumerism (expensive lifestyles which we are unable to afford). Many of us are competing and investing in less valuable and unaffordable commodities like flashy cars and clothes. The other tendency is to move into upmarket suburbs and buy very expensive houses thereby tying ourselves to unmanageable debts. The result of this tendency is to live and work for micro-lenders commonly known as (Bo-Machonisa) for the better part of our lives up to a point where we cannot take it any longer. Consequently, we would then be tempted to be involved in all sorts of graft and corruption. When it all fails, many of us will then resort to killing first our families and then ourselves. This calls into focus a need to foster social cohesion and restoration of family values in an endeavour to build a caring society. We are therefore called upon to step up our moral regeneration campaign.

Mr Speaker

HIV and AIDS epidemic continues to be a source of great concern to this government. In this regard, our comprehensive HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment campaign is well under way. Our eight accredited sites are implementing the comprehensive HIV and AIDS management plan. Our aim is to expand this comprehensive response to as many health institutions as possible, as and when they get accredited.

However, the key government message of prevention remains the cornerstone of our response to the scourge of HIV and AIDS. Although government has and can do whatever possible within its means and powers, the ultimate responsibility rests with our people to take care of themselves.

Mr Speaker

Like we have said before, the youth of our country are our wealth and future. The democratic government has invested immense resources in youth development programmes and interventions. We call upon all of our youth in their various formations to seize these opportunities in order to secure a better future for themselves.

Our government will continue to pursue its progressive policies of focusing on designated groupings and special programmes like the youth, women, people with disabilities, children and the elderly. We are confident that when the review process commences as announced by the President, we would have comfortably reached the targets in all respects.

Mr Speaker

Our Legacy project of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, i.e. the HP i-Community in Mogalakwena is now in the third phase, i.e. replication phase. In line with its objective of bridging the digital divide, the project has succeeded in developing an IT model which is capable of responding to the needs of rural communities. Apart from exposing the community to the values and virtues of IT, the project also makes it possible for the community to access other government services electronically. We are presently considering the idea of turning the centre into Information Technology Institute. We firmly believe that with proper conception and planning around this idea, this centre could become an IT hub for the whole country and the SADC region.

Mr Speaker

We note with concern our inability to overcome the problem of backlog in classroom provisioning. The President has rightfully directed that this anomaly would have been wiped out by the end of this financial year. However, it appears that we would not be succeeding in realising this policy directive due to various factors.

There is a sense that in an effort by parents and learners to look for best performing schools, the best performing become overcrowded, whilst the under-performing schools get under-populated. This skewed development makes it very difficult for government to be in a position to quantify the extent of the problem of classroom shortage. In this regard, the Department of Education must make a thorough audit of available space as against the need for classroom accommodation in order to eliminate this anomaly.

The other challenge the government will have to deal with as a matter of extreme urgency, is the proper equipping of these schools through provisioning of furniture and learner support materials in order to create a conducive learning environment.

Mr Speaker

Another matter of great concern to this government has and continues to be the persistent issue of temporary educators. Every year at the beginning of an academic programme we are confronted with the problem of shortage of qualified educators and termination of contracts of those employed on temporary basis. It is high time that these issues should be resolved, and therefore the government must find a permanent solution to this recurring problem.

Despite all these problems, the province continues to record an increasing matric pass rate and remarkable performance in Mathematics and related Natural Sciences. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our learners and educators for the job well done.

All these achievements are possible due to the continued cooperation of all stakeholders, including parents, educators and learners. We appeal to all of you to continue to do this excellent job.

Mr Speaker

Building on these impressive and remarkable achievements of some of our schools in Maths and Sciences, the Department of Education should explore the possibility of establishing “Centres of Excellence” in every district. This will ensure that government gets the opportunity to make the necessary intervention earlier to galvanise the momentum of producing good results, particularly in Maths and Science as we meet the demands and skills needs of our economy.

Mr Speaker

As a gesture of goodwill and a sign that our collective efforts are indeed bearing fruit, we received a written message of appreciation from the community of Ga-Kibi through Kgoshi Lebogo, some few months after holding a successful Imbizo in their area late last year. The letter reads thus:

“We would like to thank the Premier together with the Provincial Cabinet for the visit at our area last year 11th of August 2004. We are also thankful that the Imbizo was not just a visit for the sake of it as we can now see that some of our people’s priorities are receiving your utmost attention. Examples of the fruits of your visit include amongst others, imminent renovation of Mabotha School, the continued provision of low cost houses and chiefly the upgrading of the Schiermonikoog Road which is at design stage.”

These words of encouragement and many others we have received in the past nine months, only serve to attest to the fact that our government’s commitment to the course of addressing the plight of the poorest of the poor is unwavering.

Mr Speaker

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate patriots of our neighbouring lands who like true Africans, saw it fit to allow the will of the people to prevail. The democratic electoral successes in Botswana including change of guard in both Namibia and Mozambique bears testimony to the fact that Africa’s road to peace is within reach. We are therefore looking forward with great optimism to witness the realisation of yet another successful election in Zimbabwe scheduled for next month. We hope, pray and wish that our neighbours north of the border would find one another in resolving problems of their nation during this crucial period in their history. For indeed, the only long lasting solution to their political conflict rests with the Zimbabweans themselves.

Mr Speaker

Two months ago, the world witnessed one of the worst natural disasters yet to befall humanity. The Tsunami tidal waves that have left many people of South East Asia and East Africa destitute have been met with an equalled and unprecedented world solidarity which was mobilised in response to the mayhem following the sea quake. We therefore take this opportunity to express our profound sympathies and condolences to the families of those who have lost their loved ones and wish those who were emotionally and physically injured a speedy recovery. At the same time we wish to also express our sincere gratitude to the millions of the citizens of the world and the hundreds of thousands of Limpopo citizens and South Africa as a whole who pledged solidarity by supporting the established disaster relief funds. Your actions bear testimony to the fact that indeed there are great prospects and possibilities to develop a generous, caring and humane world.

Mr Speaker

We are confident that, as they have done before, the people of this province do not only want to see Limpopo achieve its development objectives, but also have what it takes to accelerate this process. You are distinguished by your optimism, humbleness and above all your determination and courage to turn any untenable situation to your advantage and favour. The horizon is clear, go for it.

Ndaa!