

**ADDRESS BY MS S.H. NTOMBELA, PREMIER OF THE FREE STATE AT  
THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT'S ENGAGEMENT WITH TRADITIONAL &  
KHOI-SAN LEADERS IN BLOEMFONTEIN, FREE STATE PROVINCE, 25  
AUGUST 2022**

Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. David Mabuza

Deputy Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr.  
Obed Bapela

Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Mr.  
Mcebisi Skwatsha

Members of the Free State Executive Council,

Morena e Moholo wa Bakoena ba Mopeli,

Morena Moremoholo Motebang Mopeli

Morena e Moholo wa Batlokoa ba Mota,

Morena Montoeli Mota,

Chairperson of the National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders,  
Morena Neo Mopeli,

Chairperson of the Free State House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders,  
Morena Neo Mopeli

Deputy Chairperson of the Free State House of Traditional and Khoi-San  
Leaders, Kgosatsana Gaboilelwe

Director-General, Mr. Kopung Ralikontsane and other Senior Officials,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dumelang,

I would like to start by acknowledging and appreciating the presence of the chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Task Team which has been set up by President Cyril Ramaphosa to respond to issues raised by traditional and Khoi-San leaders.

Deputy President you were here just three weeks ago visiting the House of Traditional Leaders.

Your quick return to the Free State to engage with all of our traditional and Khoi- San leaders reaffirms the government's commitment to prioritizing.

Traditional leadership remains a critical partner in building social coercion.

I would also like to congratulate the Free State House of Traditional Leaders on their election of the youngest member Morena Neo Alred Mopedi, as chairperson.

The June election was a serious show of confidence that young people can indeed take over the country.

As part of our nation building programmes in the Free State we continue to celebrate annual cultural days for the five recognized cultural communities.

The traditional leadership has a strong relationship with Provincial Government in hosting the annual Basotho New Year Celebration.

On the 6th of August I joined the festivities for the Basotho New Year at the Basotho Cultural Village at Phuthadihaba.

Where we promoted culture and encouraged our people to use our indigenous languages.

As custodian of culture and tradition, traditional leaders should be directly involved in the observing of important cultural events in the Free State including MACUFE, and Heritage Day.

The involvement of traditional leaders in such programmes should not only be for entertainment and celebration but it should also be meaningful and economically beneficial to rural communities.

It is about time that our rural communities become epicenters of economic activity.

But first we have to sort out the challenges that face by our traditional leadership.

- The Free State has a limited number of senior traditional leaders to serve in the houses. This has an impact in the establishment of Local and Provincial Houses. It is important that the context of the province should be considered to ensure that fair representation of traditional leaders in all structures of governance.

- As government we remain committed to advancing land ownership. I am aware that the landlessness is an issue that continues to come up during our engagements with traditional leaders.
- There is also a need to build more palaces for our traditional leaders.
- Infrastructure development in rural communities is also a problem that we have to address decisively.
- We have traditional council offices that are dilapidated and our traditional councils are in need of more funding.
- Without sufficient budgets it is indeed difficult to run activities and implement programmes.

But despite the challenges, I remain optimistic that today's engagement will serve as fertile soil for positive fruit to emerge.

It is our responsibility as government to provide an enabling environment for traditional leaders to be able to serve our communities at full capacity.

We remain committed to work with traditional leadership to provide all of the necessary support to ensure that traditional leaders are sufficiently resourced to change the lives of our people.

KEA LEBOHA