

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR VUSI MKHATSHWA, MPL, ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEMORIAL LECTURE OF DR PIXLEY KA-ISAKA SEME AND SAUL VUSIMUZI MKHIZE HELD AT THE VOLKRUST TOWN HALL, VOLKRUST, DR PIXLEY KA-ISAKA SEME LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

**Friday, 22 October 2021**

Programme Director;

Executive Mayor of Gert Sibande District Municipality, Councillor Muzi Chirwa;

Executive Mayor of Dr Pixley Ka-Isaka Seme Local Municipality, Councillor Phalaborwa Vincent Malatsi;

Chairperson of the MTPA Board, Mr Victor Mashego;

Other Board members present;

Acting HOD of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Ms Gugu Mashiteng;

CEO of the MTPA, Mr Johannes Nobunga;

Government and MTPA officials present;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

***Good morning!***

1. Programme director; it is indeed an honour and privilege to be given this rare opportunity, to reflect on the **lives and times of Dr Pixley Ka-Isaka Seme and Saul Vusimuzi Mkhize** – the two (2) outstanding heroes of our people. These outstanding leaders contributed immensely to our country's struggle for liberation and democracy.
2. We are gathered here today, in this Memorial Lecture, under different circumstances of human life, as defined by the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. The impact of this pandemic on our people and the economy has been adequately documented, and, thus, I am convinced that everybody present here, is aware of COVID-19, and how we should behave in mitigating its impact. We must, therefore, continue to encourage our people to vaccinate, and continue to observe the non-pharmaceutical interventions of **social distancing, wearing of a mask, sanitising and or washing our hands regularly.**
4. Programme Director; this Memorial Lecture takes place just ten (10) days, before we go and cast our votes to elect the political party which should continue to run the local government sphere. As we fast approach November 1, we urge our people to go out in their numbers, and use this day effectively, to register their voice through voting. We must be cognisant that these two (2) foremost heroes of our struggles we are remembering today, have fought relentlessly for this noble human right; a right to vote.
5. Programme Director; we must commend the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA), for arranging this critically important programme – the Gert Sibande Liberation Heritage Route celebration – which gives us an ample opportunity to muse and reflect on the significant contributions made by those who were engaged in the struggle against apartheid and colonialism.
6. This Liberation Heritage Route celebration helps us to also explore and showcase our tourism offerings to both the domestic and in-bound tourists; it helps us to showcase our rich historical tapestry, heritage, culture and diversity within our province, which has a unique tourism ecosystem.

7. And through this event, we are equally giving the township and rural tourism an opportunity to derive positive economic spin-offs from the value chain.
8. Ordinarily, a Lecture of this magnitude must give a biographical information about the outstanding figures we are honoring, in terms of their places of birth, narrate about their upbringing; and how they got to be exposed to the socio-economic and political struggles of the time, However, to save our audience from this detail, I will rather elect to talk about the political endeavours which defined their collective vision for South Africa and her people.
9. Programme Director; the task given to me today is mammoth, as I am given a responsibility to capture the collective imagination of the people, by speaking about the lives and times of two (2) outstanding historic figures, who through their contributions, have changed the course of the annals of history.
10. Arguably, it would be impossible to do justice to the social and political endeavours of these two giants in one lecture. However, I shall hasten to tease out the underlying aspects of their endeavours, which were intrinsically linked with the struggle of the people in its whole and totality.
11. Born on 01 October 1881, Dr Pixley Ka-Isaka Seme was the founding member of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC); the current African National Congress (ANC). This is an organisation which was formed primarily on the basis of bringing all Africans together, as one people, and most importantly, to defend their rights and freedom;

and one of his many and outstanding political endeavours was on the land question.

12. Amongst his other political endeavours, was the unity of the African people, and this is consistent with primary mission which informed the founding of the ANC in 1912. During that period, Dr Seme made a very interesting statement, albeit important, that **for as long as black people were divided, they would not enjoy the fruits of the of human civilisation and progress.**
13. Programme Director; the unity of the African people was one of the defining political endeavours of Dr Pixley Ka-Isaka Seme, and as the heirs of the success of the revolution, it is our immediate existential task to defend the unity of the movement of Seme, and the African people as a whole. This, we must do, in honour of this revolutionary giant who was produced by the social and political struggles of South Africa, and her people, in the hands of the oppressive colonial rule.
14. Dr Seme narrates about these sufferings of the people, in one of his arguments, when he said and I quote: **“Chiefs of royal blood and gentlemen of our race, we have gathered here to consider and discuss a scheme with my colleagues, and I have decided to place before you. We have discovered that in the land of their births, Africans are treated as hewers of wood and drawers of water”.**
15. Since the arrival of colonisers, our people were disposed of their land and their livestock was taken through a barrel of a gun, and the manifestation of our problems, as black people, started there, and we are still persisting even today.

16. Programme Director; Dr Seme as the first President of the ANC, had a fundamental belief on the ideological conviction of black emancipation. And as Bongani Ngqulunga argues, Seme had a major contribution and a role to play, as a leading intellectual and political leader, in the struggle for black emancipation and the redemption of the African continent and its people.
17. The centrality of Dr Seme's political endeavours for the emancipation of the people of the African continent, is neatly captured in his 1906 speech entitled, "*The Regeneration of Africa*", during which he declared that he is an African, and that he had set his pride over his race, against a hostile public opinion. What followed was a spirited defense of the African people, and their contributions to human civilisation, science, the arts and culture, and other areas of human existence.
18. These are some of the few issues which underpinned the political contribution of the Dr Pixley Ka-Isaka Seme, in defense against oppression; and it is vividly clear that he didn't only pursue the struggle to liberate South African oppressed masses, but the African continent as a whole.
19. Fortunately, his legacy has been carried out by his organisation, the ANC, through the tactical victory of the National Democratic Revolution in 1994, and the programmes of change the ANC-led government has put in place since the '94 democratic dispensation until today, in terms of pushing back the frontiers of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

20. Programme Director; we are not oblivious of the concrete realities that in upholding the political endeavours and visions of Dr Seme, setbacks were proliferated. We acknowledge these challenges and headwinds, and we have made commitments to address these challenges, as a listening and interventionist government of the people.
21. In its 2021 Local Government Elections Manifesto, the governing party commits to **build better municipalities, working together with communities**; that dialectical relationship between the people and their municipalities, reaffirms the centrality of the political endeavours of Dr Pixley Ka-Isaka seme. This is because a properly functioning municipality, with sound and efficient financial systems, has the capacity to create a conducive environment for our people to adequately express their talents and thrive. And this is intrinsically connected to the black emancipation thoughts of Dr Seme.
22. Let's use local government to re-ignite the endeavours and missions of Dr Seme, and for his legacy to live longer, we must ensure that we build the capacity in our municipalities, so that they are enabled to deliver quality services to the people. We must restore the dignity of our people because there is no dignity in poverty, and Dr Seme wouldn't be pleased to see his vision, and that of his peers, that of liberating black people being in vain.
23. Programme Director; I would have committed a grave error to conclude this Memorial Lecture, without briefly touching on the life and the critical role played by **Saul Vusimuzi Mkhize**, in the representation of the rights of the people of this District, against the white minority rule.

24. Saul Mkhize was born on 06 June 1935 in Driefontein; and the significant contributions made by him in this District, in the area of Driefontein to be specific, feature prominently in our rich historical tapestry and heritage. The conservation of this cultural heritage and tourism are dialectically inseparable, because the historic monuments and sites which depicts the fantastic work done by these heroic figures, constitute basic resources to attract visitors to our District and Province.
25. This anti-apartheid activist and land rights campaigner, spirited by his involvement in the struggle for land on behalf of the people, drew inspiration from the political endeavours of Dr Seme. He relentlessly fought against the removal of our people from their land by the regime; hence that convincingly heralded in the name change of Driefontein to Saul Mkhizeville. A statue was also erected in his memory, as a symbolic gesture of his contribution to the struggle against the removals of the people of Mkhondo from their land.
26. Mkhize served as a chairman of the Driefontein Board of Directors, and was dastardly killed by a ruthless white police constable, for organising a march against forceful removals.
27. Programme Director; the collective political endeavours and visions of Dr Seme and Mr Mkhize on the land question have not been in vain, as the South African parliament has introduced a process of conducting public hearings in 2018, to engage the public on the possibility of amending Section 25 of the Constitution, in order to enable the expropriation of land without compensation.

28. Parliament, through the joint Committee, have thus solicited the following views:

- ***There is unequal and skewed ownership of land in the country;***
- ***The security of tenure for farmworkers, farm tenants and those residing on communal land held in a Trust must be assured;***
- ***Corruption, an insufficient land reform budget, along with a lack of capacity within the state were mentioned as hindering the land reform process;***
- ***The state is urged to formulate a clear strategy for land redistribution to address the injustices of the past;***
- ***The Constitution should explicitly state the expropriation of land without compensation, as a legitimate option for land reform.***

26. As a result, Parliament's Ad hoc Committee is in the process of initiating and introducing legislation to amend Section 25 of the Constitution, and there cannot be a better way of honoring both Dr Pixley Ka-Isaka Seme and Saul Mkhize, than ensuring the return of the land to its rightful owners, and ultimately restoring their dignity.

27. Finally, I want to urge members of this community and Mpumalanga at large, to take advantage of the vaccination programme that is being rolled-out by government. Please go and vaccinate, so that we weaken and undermine the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic. We must

obliterate this pandemic, so that we fully get our freedom as a people. And the only way we can achieve this, is by being vaccinated.

29. Let's dismiss all the conspiracy theories about the vaccine; the negative reports about the vaccine are baseless, and must be dismissed with the contempt they deserve.

30. We remain appreciative of the selfless contribution made by Dr Seme and Saul Mkhize, in our struggle for liberation and democracy. We salute them!

I thank you!