



office of the premier

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Lihovisi la Ndvunankhulu

I-Ofisi Lika Ndunakulu

Kantoor van die Premier

WELCOMING ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF MPUMALANGA NATIONAL LABOUR RELATIONS CONFERENCE -16 SEPTEMBER 2026

- Honourable Minister of Public Service and Administration;
Inkosi Mzamo Buthelezi
- Honourable Deputy Minister of Public Service and
Administration; **Ms Pinky Kekana**
- The Esteemed Acting Deputy Judge President of the
Labour Court; **Ms Maletsatsi Mahalelo**
- General Secretary of the Public Service Coordinating
Bargaining Council (PSCBC); **Mr Frikkie de Bruin**
- Acting Director General of Public Service and
Administration **Mr Willie Vukela**
- Acting Deputy Director General of Public Service and
Administration, **Mr Dumisani Hlophe**
- Director General of National Treasury, **Mr Duncan
Pieterse**
- Director General of Mpumalanga, **Ms Maggie Skosana**
- Esteemed Leaders of Organised Labour;
- Distinguished Delegates

WELCOMING ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE PREMIER

Good morning.

1. It is both a profound privilege and a distinct honour to welcome you all to the beautiful province of Mpumalanga, a province that works for all, for this critical National Labour Relations Conference.
2. As we meet today, we are guided by the theme of the conference: **“Building State Capacity Through the Professionalisation of the Labour Relations in the Public Sector”**
3. I always listen to people who argue that, the governing party, and even the Government of National Unity have developed and enacted sound policies.
4. Indeed, our priorities are compelling and speak directly to the challenges facing our people. However, when it comes to implementation, to borrow the concept often used by Minister Mantashe, **“dololo.”** There is very little to show on the ground. The question therefore is: **Why?**

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5. This forces me to ask a fundamental question, are we winning the battle to build the capacity of the state to effectively meet its constitutional obligations and deliver on the promises we make to our people?
6. Having good policies is important, but policies are only as good as the institutions and people responsible for implementing them. A capable, ethical and responsive state is therefore not an option, it is a prerequisite for meaningful development.
7. The theme for today's engagement provides a perfect foundation for what promises to be a robust, intellectually stimulating and developmental dialogue.
8. This gathering is far more than an item on our administrative calendar, it represents a decisive reaffirmation of our collective baseline to uphold fairness, human dignity, and social justice within the public service value chain.
9. South Africa's democratic breakthrough was forged in the crucible of the workers' struggle. From the shop floor to the modern public service, organized labour remains the heartbeat of our nation's social and economic progress.

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10. Today, as we navigate a complex landscape defined by fiscal constraints, rapid technological disruption, and the urgent imperative for inclusive growth, our labour relations frameworks must serve as the anchor for institutional stability and high-performance governance.
11. Our Constitution guarantees the rights of both workers and employers, recognising the need to create a fair and balanced labour relations environment.
12. However, it places particular emphasis on protecting workers from the potential abuse of power by employers, especially where there are inadequate checks and balances.
13. The regulation of the employment relationship is therefore essential to ensure that workers can freely and fairly offer their labour, while employers are able to exercise their legitimate rights and responsibilities within the framework of the law.
14. Ultimately, our labour relations system must promote fairness, dignity, equality and a balance of power between employers and employees.

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15. This conference must serve as a platform to strengthen collective bargaining and ensure that workplace friction is resolved through mature negotiation rather than protracted confrontation.

16. Here in Mpumalanga, we have witnessed firsthand the tangible rewards of proactive social dialogue. Following our milestone Provincial Labour Summit, provincial representatives from **COSATU**, **FEDUSA**, and **SAFTU** signed the historic Labour Summit Pledge. Through this declaration, all social partners committed to:

- **Upholding** unwavering labour peace and fair labour practices;
- **Implementing** resolutions that drive sound labour relations, collective bargaining, and efficient governance;
- **Co-creating** an enabling, high-performance environment for uninterrupted public service delivery; and
- **Abiding** strictly by the Labour Relations Act while defending the constitutional rights of all employees.

17. We have moved decisively past the era of signing declarations without implementation. The resolutions of our summit were formally adopted by the Coordinating

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Chamber of the PSCBC for Mpumalanga and are actively operationalised.

18. Our Labour Relations practitioners across the province are now structurally aligned through the Provincial Labour Relations Forum. Meeting quarterly, this forum rigorously audits our performance in grievance handling, misconduct management, dispute resolution, and matters before the labour courts.

19. Acting on the strategic counsel of this Forum, we advised provincial management to establish functional bilateral engagement platforms at the departmental level. Today, every provincial department features a joint management-labour structure chaired directly by the Head of Department (HoD).

20. This institutional mechanism has shifted our approach from crisis management to conflict prevention. I am pleased to report that through regular, structured engagement between unions and management, Mpumalanga has maintained total labour peace over the past year.

21. We must highly commend the Labour Relations Officers across our Provincial Administration, alongside the Labour

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Relations Unit within the DPSA, for their uncompromising insistence that management proactively engage unions on all matters affecting employer-employee relations.

22. Their expert counsel is indispensable to maintaining stability within our government. It is absolutely vital that Labour Relations practitioners across the country continue to professionalize their cadre, network regularly, and benchmark best practices to sharpen management's capacity to resolve workplace challenges.

23. This conference must inspire the deep Professionalisation of the Labour Relations components across all provinces and national departments.

24. The Labour Relations units must never be treated as an administrative refuge for underperformance. Instead, it must be positioned as the premier custodian of institutional integrity, ethical conduct, strict discipline, and public sector productivity.

25. As the Premier of Mpumalanga, I pledge that our provincial government will remain an objective, fair, and reliable custodian of labour relations. We will enforce the law,

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safeguard vulnerable workers, and foster innovation within our workplaces.

26. However, sustained success requires genuine partnership, a willingness from all social partners to place the broader national interest above narrow, immediate gains.

27. As you begin your deliberations, let this conference be remembered not just for the depth of its debates, but for the decisiveness of its outcomes.

28. Let it mark a turning point where we collectively recommit to building public sector workplaces that are safe, fair, rewarding, and highly productive.

29. Let us honour the sacrifices of the pioneers of our labour movement by ensuring that the future of work in South Africa is defined by dignity, constructive dialogue, and shared prosperity. I wish you highly successful and constructive deliberations.

30. Lastly, I invite you to extend your stay in this beautiful province of ours and take the opportunity to experience all that Mpumalanga has to offer.

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31. Enjoy the tranquility and natural beauty of the Province of the Rising Sun, a province blessed with landscapes and attractions that are truly extraordinary. Here, we proudly say that the sun was made in the ancient Makhonjwa Mountains, one of our province's remarkable natural treasures.

32. Visit God's Window, where you can experience breathtaking panoramic views that make you feel as though you are standing at the gateway to heaven on earth. Take a game drive through the Kruger National Park and encounter Africa's iconic Big Five in their natural habitat.

I thank you.