



# STATE OF THE PROVINCE — ADDRESS —

05<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2026



*“Mpumalanga, a Province that works for all”*



MPUMALANGA  
PROVINCIAL  
GOVERNMENT



MPUMALANGA  
THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN

**STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS,**  
**THURSDAY 05 MARCH 2026 DELIVERED BY THE PREMIER OF MPUMALANGA**  
**PROVINCE**

Speaker of the Mpumalanga legislature, **Honourable Makhosazane Masilela**

Deputy Speaker of the Mpumalanga legislature, **Honourable Sam Masango**

Honourable members of the Provincial Legislature

Honourable MECs

Judge President of the High Court of Mpumalanga, **Judge Mphahlele**

Esteemed Members of the Judiciary

The Acting Provincial Police Commissioner **Dr General Z Mkhwanazi**

Hon Ministers and Deputy Ministers present

Hon Members of the National Assembly

Hon Members of the National Council of Provinces present

Executive Mayor of the City of Mbombela Local Municipality, Councillor Sibongile Makushe-Mazibuko and all Executive Mayors and Councillors

Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders and Khoisan who is also President of CONTRALESA, **Kgoši Mokoena**

Chairpersons and board members of our parastatals

Director General of Mpumalanga Province **Ms Maggie Skosana**

Secretary of the Legislature Mr Hubert Shabangu

All Senior government officials

The Provincial Secretary of the governing party **Cde Muzi Chirwa**

Member of the ANC Veterans League and a successful business woman umake **Norah Fakude**

Leaders of the tripartite alliance,

Leaders of the opposition parties

Leaders of our social partners, big business and small business and the informal sector, non-governmental-organizations and religious organizations

Leaders of institutions of higher learning

Esteemed guests'

Ladies and gentlemen

Sanibonani, Dumelang, Avuxeni, Lotjhani

1. Madam Speaker, I stand before you as one of many leaders who were raised and nurtured by their grandmothers. Today, I am especially proud and deeply grateful that my own grandmother is present in these proceedings.
2. After undergoing a cataract operation and successfully regaining her eyesight, she is able to witness this moment with us. Her presence is not only a personal blessing, but a powerful reminder of the strength, sacrifice, and resilience of the women who shape our lives and our nation.
3. Our Provincial Legislature and municipal councils remain stable and focused on their mandate. We extend our sincere appreciation to all political parties for deploying honorable public representatives who remain steadfast in thoughtful deliberation and rigorous intellectual engagement.
4. Their commitment to critical thinking and constructive debate strengthens our democracy and enhances the quality of governance in our province.
5. I stand before you today, to give an account that Mpumalanga government is hard at work in building a society where our people are completely free from the shackles of poverty and have food to eat.
6. This includes actions taken to fulfil commitments arising from the historic Kliptown gathering, 71 years ago, where ordinary citizens of all races united for a common cause produced an extraordinary document of principles and they called it “**The Freedom Charter**”
7. We have no doubt that after this account, people will realise that we are indeed hard at work and embrace, Mohamed Mamdan’s view that their government can not be accused of lacking the courage to try even though it is not yet uhuru.
8. Madam Speaker, I would like to share a scripture from the Gospel according to Saint Mark, chapter 4, verse 9, and echoed in Matthew chapter 11 verse 9: “*Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.*” :**Yiza nendlebe mina ngiza nendaba**
9. Madam Speaker, allow me to congratulate the class of 2025 matriculants who have made us proud with an overall pass rate of 86.55%, an encouraging improvement from last year’s 84.99%.
10. Our top achiever, Luyanda Ndhlozi from Elangwane Secondary School in Volksrust, under the Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Municipality in the Gert Sibande District, has secured her place among the top 40 achievers nationally. We are truly proud of Luyanda and the many learners who excelled in their matric examinations.
11. As we celebrate their success, we remain mindful of the persistent challenges of access to tertiary institutions that many still face. As government, we continue working tirelessly to expand post-school education and training opportunities, firm in our belief that education is the surest pathway to a better future and broader life choices.

12. **Madam Speaker**, On a sombre note, I extend my heartfelt condolences, on behalf of the people of Mpumalanga, to all those who lost their loved ones during the recent floods that engulfed our nation.
13. We also convey our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those who tragically lost their lives in road accidents across our province during the festive season. In these moments of grief, we stand united in compassion and solidarity with every affected family.
14. Our province and a country, also lost a leader, a gentle giant, former Deputy President Honourable DD Mabuza. This week the country has also lost a freedom fighter, one of the Delmas treason trialist cde Terror Lekota. To all the grieving families, akwehlanga Lungehlanga.
15. **Madam Speaker**, We are guided by the **Freedom Charter**, which serves as a pillar of our Constitution and the cornerstone of our democracy, driving government efforts to eradicate poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment.
  - Our provincial economy is gradually growing
  - Unemployment started declining
  - Poverty rate and levels of inequality have declined significantly.
  - Inflation is at its lowest in many years
  - We are continuously recording an increase in Matric pass rate
  - Bachelor degree passes increased to twenty eight thousand, six hundred and ten (28,610), demonstrating an increase in the quality of our education
  - The rand is stronger than the dollar in 20 years, meaning we pay less for imports
  - For the first time in our history, 27 doctors are now permanently placed in local clinics.
16. This is our story, this is our song worth sharing with the people of Mpumalanga. Does this mean all is perfect? Can we say, all is well? No! Not at all. We have not yet reached the promised land. It means we must roll up our sleeves, put our shoulders to the wheel, and work harder than before.
17. What we see is the light at the end of the tunnel, not an oncoming train, but a beacon of hope towards a brighter future.
18. **Madam Speaker**, the road to economic freedom is arduous. But we are prepared, well equipped, and ready to walk it. We have a reason to celebrate as Mpumalanga, we have successfully hosted several G20 events during South Africa's Presidency, putting our province on the map and boosting tourism prospects.
19. These events addressed environment and climate sustainability, development, just energy transition, critical for a coal-producing province with 12 of the 14 coal-fired power plants, research and innovation, anti-corruption, and tourism.

20. They contributed significantly to local tourism, generating income for hospitality industry and small business sectors. All these events were hosted at Kruger National Park to showcase our biodiversity and commitment to conservation.
21. **Madam Speaker**, this year we commemorate important milestones in our political history. These events changed the course of history and shaped our journey to the democracy we enjoy today.
22. Seventy years ago, over 20,000 women of all races marched to Pretoria against pass laws. Their courage reminds us that women played a foundational role in our liberation.
23. It reminds us that gender equality is not just a symbolic gesture. It is a moral obligation, a human right, and essential to improving lives.
24. This year, we will commemorate the life and legacy of former Mozambican President, Samora Machel. Together with the Government of Mozambique, we will host the 40th Commemoration of his passing in Mbuzini.
25. This occasion will not only honour his contribution to the liberation of our region, but also reaffirm the enduring bonds of solidarity and friendship between our two nations.
26. Again this year, we will also proudly celebrate the centenary of the Kruger National Park. Through a series of campaigns, we will highlight how this iconic Park has positively transformed the lives of surrounding communities and strengthened our province's tourism industry.
27. Fifty years ago, on June 16, Soweto's youth led a historic march against Afrikaans, as a medium of instruction and demanded an end to Bantu Education, designed to limit black youth to unskilled labour.
28. As Oliver Tambo reminded us, "The children of any nation are its future. A country, a movement, or person that does not value its youth does not deserve its future."
29. It is against this backdrop, that the ANC-led government works tirelessly to address youth unemployment through various programmes like the Premier's Youth Development Fund, benefiting over two hundred and eighty (280) youth-owned enterprises to the tune of R358 million.
30. Our Expanded Public Works Programmes provide much-needed income and work experience.
31. Agricultural initiatives targeting youth and women, the Youth Employment Service, and the Presidential Employment Stimulus all of them bring relief to unemployment challenges.
32. As we commemorate these events, we must remember our history, uphold our constitutional obligations, and unite across racial lines, age, and status to build a better Mpumalanga, better South Africa and a better World.

33. The State of the Province Address (SOPA) outlines the actions that we have taken since our 2025 SOPA and the steps we intend taking for the next 12 months to advance the strategic priorities of our government.
34. In 2024 during the national and provincial elections people from Mpumalanga gave us a mandate to form government and fulfil their aspirations which are contained in our election manifesto and the government's strategic priorities.
35. Let us remind ourselves what these priorities are:
- Firstly, to drive inclusive growth and job creation.
  - Secondly, to reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living.
  - Thirdly, to build a capable, ethical and developmental state.
36. Today, I stand before this august house not only to give an account of the progress made in addressing these priorities, but also to call upon all of us to work together in building a Mpumalanga Province that stands firmly upon the foundations we have laid since the dawn of our democracy.
37. Madam Speaker, we need to consolidate our efforts, work towards a common vision forged through dialogue, through partnerships with all stakeholders and through an honest and frank reflection on the lessons learnt.
38. We must not shy away from honest self-reflection; we must acknowledge our shortcomings, confront our mistakes, and work diligently to correct them, improving wherever we have fallen short.
39. **Madam Speaker**, the recent arrests of several government officials and business people on allegations of corruption, fraud and money laundering demonstrate that government is taking a firm and uncompromising stance against corruption.
40. As government we fully support the work of the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, the Hawks and any other law enforcement agency, and we will fully co-operate with investigations aimed at rooting out corruption.

### **Driving Inclusive Growth and Creating Jobs**

41. **Madam Speaker**, a Chinese proverb says that a single tree falling makes a loud noise that everyone hears, while millions of trees grow in silence, but they still grow.
42. This reminds us that a single minor mistake by government can draw widespread attention, while the many quiet successes that improve lives every day often go unnoticed.
43. The year 2025 was a seminal year for South Africa and Mpumalanga's economy. Despite global volatility, we saw a progress reflected in provincial economic indicators.

44. The economy is growing again by more than 1%, unemployment is declining, poverty and inequality are lower than a decade ago, and inflation is at its lowest in years.
45. Challenges remain, logistics, infrastructure, skills, and creating enabling environments at municipal level, but new hope and optimism are emerging across Mpumalanga.
46. The highly successful Mpumalanga Investment and Mining Conference in October 2025 showcased our province as a destination of choice for investors.
47. Of the R238 billion investment commitments, R25 billion has been signed off focusing on the green economy. This marks a significant turning point and a major boost for the provincial economy.
48. South Africa's growth looks steadier, expanding for five consecutive quarters, the longest unbroken growth phase since 2018, benefiting Mpumalanga directly. Provincial growth for 2026 is projected at 1.3%, with an average of 2% per annum from 2027–2029.
49. Catalytic projects in these sectors will positively impact job creation, reduction of poverty, and the level of inequality, bringing our Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP) target of 3% growth within reach.
50. Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey for Fourth Quarter of 2025 shows Mpumalanga's employment at 1.28 million, the highest on record reflecting net job gains of 37,420, the second highest nationally.
51. Gains were notable in construction and trade, with five of six quarters in 2024/25 recording net employment growth. Manufacturing losses remain a concern and must be addressed.
52. We must keep our eye on the MTDP target of at least 60,000 new jobs per year. In 2025, Mpumalanga created twenty eight thousand, seven hundred and seventeen (28,717) jobs, almost 50% of this target, requiring stronger performance in coming years.
53. Industries with high job creation potential include agriculture and agro-processing, construction, trade including tourism and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, finance and business services.
54. Provincial unemployment rate fell to 32.3% in Fourth Quarter of 2025, improving our ranking to 4th lowest nationally. The provincial MTDP target of 25% unemployment is achievable with higher growth and sustained job creation efforts.
55. Female unemployment and youth unemployment remain unacceptably high, despite notable improvements. Ensuring that young people acquire relevant qualifications and practical skills is critical to reducing graduate unemployment, which currently stands at 14,4%.
56. **Madam Speaker**, the property sector is one of the largest and most powerful economic engines in the country, yet, despite its scale and resilience, the sector has remained largely untransformed

and inaccessible to previously disadvantaged individuals.

57. In the spirit of transformation and alleviating youth unemployment in Mpumalanga, we will be entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Property Practitioners Regulatory Authority and Services SETA to embark on a Real Estate Training and Placement Programme that will be implemented to equip participants with industry-relevant knowledge, practical competencies, and placement opportunities within the property sector.
58. The programme aims to address unemployment, promote entrepreneurship, and increase participation in the real estate industry. Two hundred (200) job opportunities will be created in the first cohort to be recruited at the beginning of the 2026/27 Financial Year.
59. We want to thank the Property Practitioners Regulatory Authority leadership and the Minister of Human Settlements for partnering with Mpumalanga Province in this programme.
60. The Services Seta contributed R5 million towards education in our province, enabling us to award 50 learners bursaries of R100 000 each for the 2026 academic year.
61. Madam Speaker I would like to take this opportunity to thank the private sector, particularly our mining companies, for their contributions to the province, especially in the education sector. We have received numerous donations, and these efforts do not go unnoticed.
62. Stats SA's Poverty Trends report shows South Africa's lower bound poverty line (LBPL) improved by 8.8% between 2015–2023, to 37.9%.
63. Mpumalanga recorded the second largest improvement among provinces: Lower Bound Poverty Line dropped by 12.7% from 51.1% to 38.4%, ranking fourth lowest nationally.
64. **Madame Speaker**, this is a clear indication that our efforts and interventions in the reduction of poverty are working.
65. Income inequality measurement nationally, has improved moving toward the National Development Plan target of 0.60 by 2030. Mpumalanga recorded the best provincial Income inequality measurement commonly known as gini-coefficient at 0.541.
66. The National Income Dynamics Study confirms that education and training improve employability, with higher qualifications often leading to better-paying jobs.
67. Tourism remains a key economic and job driver. Mpumalanga is South Africa's second most visited province by both international and domestic tourists due to our world renowned fona and flora, mainly by tourists from SADC countries.

## *Social and Economic Infrastructure*

68. **Madam Speaker**, from the outset we identified infrastructure as a catalyst for socio-economic growth. Investment in infrastructure drives jobs directly through construction and maintenance, and indirectly by enhancing productivity and lowering business costs.
69. It creates temporary employment during construction while supporting permanent jobs in industries that use the infrastructure. Infrastructure also improves mobility for rural and local communities, helps informal and small businesses reach markets, and facilitates travel for school children and citizens.
70. This extends beyond productive sectors like agriculture to essential socio-economic infrastructure, including health facilities, schools, electricity, water and sanitation, roads, transport networks, and ICT systems. In the past year, Mpumalanga invested around R2.5 billion on road infrastructure, spanning urban and rural areas.
71. Our road network is like arteries carrying the lifeblood of the province, connecting urban and rural communities, Gauteng, Limpopo, KZN and neighbouring countries Mozambique and Eswatini, enabling economic and social activity.
72. While transitioning to clean energy, our economy remains reliant on coal mines and coal power stations, requiring upgrades and maintenance of coal haulage roads, as the Province, we affirm that coal will co-exist with green energy.
73. We will continue to monitor progress on Coal haulage projects. The eMalahleni and Driekoppies Bridges are under design and planning phase. We are making progress in upgrading our Tourism access roads, for example Thulamahashe/Cottondale to Manyeleti Road. Two of the six phases have already been completed.
74. Under the Kubhunya Lutfuli Programme, a significant number of potholes were patched, roads re-gravelled, and graded throughout the province to promote access especially in local municipalities.
75. The partnership between government and the private sector on rehabilitating Road P171/1 between Mashishing and Roosenekal Sekhukhune and the Oliphant River Lodge Phase 1 projects are progressing well.

## *Flood Damage on Provincial Infrastructure*

76. **Madam Speaker**, since December last year, torrential rains, thunderstorms, and lightning severely affected Mpumalanga, Limpopo, and parts of Mozambique, as a result in our province we lost twenty people. Two thousand five hundred and seven (2507) private properties including homes were affected, leaving more than 200 households in need of emergency shelter.

77. More than one hundred and thirty (130) SMMEs in particular those in the tourism sector were severely affected, impacting on more than 800 jobs.
78. Public infrastructure, including roads, bridges, water networks, schools, libraries, health facilities, suffered extensive damage. Most affected areas in Mpumalanga include Nkomazi, Bushbuckridge, the City of Mbombela and Thaba Chweu.
79. A number of oversight visits were undertaken by various Executive Authorities, including the President of the Republic of South Africa, myself as the Premier of the Province, MECs, Ministers and Executive Mayors amongst others.
80. All response interventions were successful with the support of several NGOs such as the Gift of the Givers, Red Cross, Al-Imdaad Foundation, including business such as Vodacom and Old Mutual to name but a few.
81. The national government classified this disaster as a national disaster, unlocking resources for multi-sectoral relief and infrastructure rehabilitation.
82. Government has begun with the work of restoring infrastructure, in some areas emergency work has been completed. However, there is still much more work to be done.
83. Whilst departments and municipalities have adjusted their capital spending budgets to accommodate emergencies, there is a shortfall of R5, 9 billion.
84. Working with the National Government, we have started delivering temporal residential units targeting the most vulnerable households in Bushbuckridge and Nkomazi Local Municipalities.
85. Roads requiring urgent attention include:
- D2296 between Karino and Tekwane South
  - D2962 and D2963 in Glenmore and Swallows-nest
  - Various roads in Nkomazi and Bushbuckridge Local Municipalities
86. Our focus is “building back better,” creating climate-resilient infrastructure capable of withstanding and recovering from shocks. This requires holistic planning across all spheres of government, the public, and private sectors.

### **Nkomazi Special Economic Zone**

87. **Madam Speaker**, we are pleased with progress on the Nkomazi Special Economic Zone (SEZ).
88. As the Chinese proverb suggests, “many trees quietly grow into a forest without making noise.” While progress is not yet visible to the naked eye, important work continues:
- Finalizing designs for bulk water, electricity, and sewer systems

- Engaging SANRAL and stakeholders on the N4 ring road configuration
- Collaborating with Infrastructure South Africa to unlock R1.2 billion for Phase One

89. In 2026/27, Mpumalanga Economic Regulator will focus on strengthening regulatory effectiveness, modernizing systems, and mitigating social harm from gambling and liquor trading.

### *Tourism: A Beacon of Hope*

90. Tourism is our beacon of hope and a guiding light in the darkness. It drives employment, contributes to economic growth, and supports livelihoods in urban, rural, and township areas. These initiatives will expand our tourism offerings and elevate Mpumalanga as a top destination.

91. The God's Window Skywalk Project progresses steadily: bulk water supply upgraded, electrical installations underway, site established, and civil works commenced. Construction is expected to start this year.

92. This initiative will expand our tourism offerings and elevate Mpumalanga as a top destination.

### *Agriculture: The Backbone of Our Economy*

93. Agriculture remains a key strategic sector for Mpumalanga, while contributing around 3% to provincial GDP, compared to mining and manufacturing, it employs about 104,000 people, 12% of total provincial employment.

94. Youth agri-preneurship continues to yield tangible results, some of the success stories of our young farmers include among others:

- Lebo Mashego, a poultry farmer in Thembisile Hani produces layers with two automated houses (15,000 capacity each)
- Fikile Nkosi in Nkomazi produces and processes mushrooms
- Lebo Dlodlu and Sizo Shabalala in Chief Albert Luthuli produce broilers and layers
- Benedict Mhlongo in Bushbuckridge produces vegetables

95. These young farmers are no longer peripheral participants; they are integrated into domestic and international markets. The province is building a new generation of commercial, compliant, and export-ready agricultural producers.

96. We will continue with our Smart Agriculture Boxes programme ensuring food security and sustainable farming; to date we have supported 20,000 households.

97. **Madam Speaker**, Recently, our economy has been affected by the Foot and Mouth Disease, impacting cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs. We welcome the announcement by His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa that Foot and Mouth Disease will now be treated as a national disaster.

98. We are working closely with national government to assist farmers in navigating these challenges. Working with the National Department of Agriculture, we have received a portion of our 1 million vaccines and we are administering it.
99. Our programs and campaigns to control and manage animal diseases will continue. We have successfully eradicated avian influenza in Gert Sibande and Nkangala, lifting the export ban on poultry products and restoring confidence in the sector.
100. The Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency continues to do a good job in facilitating the transition of our economy from traditional industries into green economy revolution.
101. A number of Multi-billion rand green energy investment projects are in the pipeline including solar-power, wind-power and hydro-power.

### *Stakeholder Partnerships*

102. **Madam Speaker**, solving complex socio-economic issues such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, gender-based violence, crime and infrastructure is not a sole responsibility of government. It requires a collaborative, all hands on deck approach by government, the private sector, labour and civil society.
103. We have signed a memorandum of agreement with the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) to leverage its expertise, research capacity, and human capital for provincial priorities.
104. This collaboration will promote among others, sustainable agriculture, innovation, and applied research, job creation and capacity building in health, education and conservation.
105. A flagship initiative is the hybrid rice project, a comprehensive industrial ecosystem driving employment and GDP growth.
106. 1.2 million hectares are dedicated to hybrid rice cultivation, producing 14.4 million tons annually, with a projected turnover of R40.32 billion.
107. This project alone will create at least 388,000 jobs across all phases, a remarkable story to share with the people of Mpumalanga.
108. Other partnership programs with UMP will focus on advanced maize, sorghum, and vegetable production.
109. Another partner, Seriti Green's Social and Economic Development portfolio has committed to align its programmes with the Mpumalanga government priorities.
110. Central to this commitment is enterprise development, focused on supporting SMMEs alongside structured entrepreneur programmes designed to catalyse sustainable job creation and broaden economic participation.

111. Through their Agri for Change programme, Seriti supports emerging agricultural entrepreneurs with technical expertise, business development skills, and improved market access.
112. The programme has contributed to 41 permanent agricultural jobs and enabled measurable entrepreneurial growth.
113. One participant secured R20 million in expansion funding, comprising R8 million in grant capital and R12 million in concessional loan funding.
114. This reflects the transformative potential of structured enterprise development when supported by financiers, mentors, and government partners.
115. The company's partnership with local government extends into youth development and social cohesion.
116. Seriti and Seriti Green is advancing South Africa's Just Energy Transition through a delivery-focused model rooted in South African ownership, capital, and operational capability.
117. To safeguard energy security, coal and renewable energy sources are being developed in parallel. This approach enables decarbonisation, creates new economic opportunities and jobs, and ensures continuity for communities historically dependent on coal.
118. Seriti Green, the renewable energy arm of the Seriti Group, has been in operation for three years and is currently constructing the 900 MW Ummbila Emoyeni Wind Farm, with the first 155 MW phase scheduled for completion in mid-2026.
119. Investment to date totals approximately R15 billion, with a further R25 billion planned over the next two years.
120. Job creation remains central to the company's work. More than 1,700 jobs have been created, with 53% allocated to local residents within a 15 km radius.
121. Seriti Green has committed to build a tower that is 16 metre high with 5.5 metre diameter surrounding one of its turbine. The tower will be painted using the legend Gogo Esther Mahlangu's artwork.
122. This will be one of the iconic feature of the Seriti Green Ummbila emoyeni project under Gert Sibande District Municipality and will be the tourism attraction area for our Province.
123. **Madam Speaker**, our collaboration with Paradigm Shift an engineering solutions company based here in Mpumalanga in hosting a Water and Sanitation conference culminated in important resolutions taken, amongst others are:
  - The private sector committed itself to investing in water and sanitation projects in the province,

- Development of water and sanitation technology and sharing it with our municipalities and,
- Promotion of the inclusion of women, youth and persons with disability in issues related to water and sanitation.

124. Government will follow up on these commitments and make sure all parties work towards their fulfilment.

### **Local Government and Human Settlement**

125. Local government is the closest authority to the people, responsible for delivering daily social services such as water, electricity, sanitation, roads, and waste management.

126. Despite challenges experienced in some areas, Stats SA figures confirmed that the majority of our citizens do have access to basic services.

127. Waste management remains particularly challenging, especially in rural communities.

128. We must acknowledge that some communities do not always receive quality services, often due to aging infrastructure that can no longer function optimally or population growth exceeding existing capacities.

129. Technical capacity is another concern, as some municipalities lack the requisite skills to maintain infrastructure, compounded by insufficient maintenance budgets.

130. Municipalities often under-budget for infrastructure upkeep. The provincial government has made a firm decision to intervene and assist municipalities facing difficulties.

131. Municipalities are now conducting skills audits to identify administrative and technical gaps.

132. To address water challenges, we are collaborating with the Department of Water and Sanitation to minimize backlogs across the province. The Loskop Bulk Water Scheme is nearing completion at 90% construction status.

133. Once completed, the residents of Thembisile Hani municipality will benefit from a reliable and sustainable water supply of 20 mega litres per day. In the meantime, the province, in collaboration with DWS and Rand Water, is exploring innovative ways to optimize water supply from existing infrastructure.

134. Several critical infrastructure projects are underway to strengthen water and sanitation services.

135. These include the construction of the Gabosch Dam along with an extensive bulk pipeline in Amsterdam, and a state-of-the-art package plant with a significant bulk pipeline in Sheepmoor, located within Mkhondo municipality.

136. The Lekwa sewer spillages and water access programme, which comprises ten projects is

designed to address sewer and water challenges in the municipality.

137. This multifaceted approach is not only aimed at eliminating sewer spillages but also ensures a reliable and sustainable water supply for all residents.
138. In addressing aging infrastructure, we are replacing asbestos bulk lines from the water treatment plant to Kuilen Phase 2, as well as from the water treatment plant to the Bloedfontein reservoir Phase 2 in Dr JS Moroka. These projects are progressing well.
139. High-priority bulk water and sanitation projects supported by multi-year grants include the upgrading of the Lydenburg Wastewater Treatment Works, which involves refurbishment of the existing 5.5 Mega litres per day capacity and expansion to 11 Mega litres per day to eliminate spillages into the Sabie River is halfway complete.
140. At the Vaal Bank Water Treatment Works, a reverse osmosis plant is being constructed to address hard metals caused by mining pollution, with progress currently at 40%. Delmas Wastewater Treatment Works is being upgraded from 4 Mega litres per day to 12 Mega litres per day, including the construction of a pre-treatment system, and this project is 68% complete.
141. The Driekoppies Regional Bulk Water Scheme is being upgraded from 20 Mega litres per day to 40 Mega litres per day with the construction of approximately 40 kilometers of bulk pipeline and several reservoirs. Of the four work packages, three are fully completed, while the last is at 15% completion.
142. These include the upgrading of the Mkhuhlu Wastewater Treatment Works, the KaMhlushwa Water Treatment Works in Nyathi, the Thaba Chweu Regional Bulk Water Supply covering Leroro, Matibidi, and Moremela, refurbishment and upgrading of the Kwazamokhule Wastewater Treatment Works, Ermelo Wastewater Treatment Works, Msukaligwa Regional Bulk Water Supply Phase 1, the Chief Albert Luthuli Bulk Water Project, and the Emalahleni Regional Bulk Water Scheme.
143. The Department of Water and Sanitation has also completed the development of the Provincial Bulk Water and Sanitation Master Plan, providing a comprehensive framework for planning and implementing bulk infrastructure projects across the province.
144. Land invasion remains a significant barrier to our vision of developing sustainable human settlements.
145. The province is committed to assisting municipalities to implement strategies to address land invasions effectively, ensuring that development and environmental preservation go hand in hand.
146. Upgrading informal settlements is essential to ensure that residents gain access to clean running water, water-borne sewage systems or ablution facilities, subsidized housing, and secure land tenure through title deeds.

147. By the end of the third quarter of 2025/26, several informal settlements had been approved and are set to be fully proclaimed as townships by 31 March 2026.
148. This will allow municipal engineering services to be installed, top structures to be built, and title deeds to be delivered.
149. In Nkangala, 32 townships have been approved and proclaimed, yielding 36,652 stands.
150. In Gert Sibande, seven SPLUMA township approvals have been granted, with two more expected before the end of March 2026. These settlements will yield 2,143 stands, plus an additional 563 stands.
151. In Ehlanzeni, one township has been approved and proclaimed, yielding 578 stands.
152. We are also creating new housing opportunities through greenfield projects to respond to the province's housing backlogs using the Human Settlements Development Grant.
153. In Nkangala, ten greenfield township projects have been approved to be proclaimed by March 2026, with a combined yield of 43,677 stands. In Gert Sibande, three SPLUMA township approvals will yield 10,849 new housing opportunities once municipal engineering services are complete.
154. Social and economic facilities are also being prioritized. For the 2026/27 financial year, we plan to construct one economic social amenity at Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in the form of a community hall at Acornhoek.
155. **Madam Speaker**, we have handed over three state of the art completed social amenities projects, a community hall and Early Childhood Development Centre in Ntunda in Nkomazi, community hall and ECD Centre in Delmas in Victor Khanye and ECD Centre in eMpumalanga in eMalahleni Local municipalities.
156. To ensure economic empowerment through secure tenure, we planned to deliver 1,000 title deeds in 2025/26 but have surpassed this target by delivering 1,674 title deeds across the province. We aim to register and deliver 2,500 more title deeds in 2026/27.
157. In the 2026/27 financial year, we plan to deliver 1,763 low-cost housing units in both formal townships and rural areas. Additionally, under the eradication of unsafe and uninhabitable housing program, 193 housing units will be built in Mkhondo, Chief Albert Luthuli, and Nkomazi. We will continue replacing 322 asbestos-roofed houses in Thembisile Hani, Thaba Chweu, and Victor Khanye municipalities.
158. **Madam Speaker**, in the 2025/26 financial year, the Department successfully reconstituted and gazetted Traditional Councils in the province under Section 16 of the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act, except for five councils with leadership vacancies.

159. We also constructed five new Traditional Council offices at Matsamo, Amashangana, Mahlaphahlapha, Kwandwalaza, and Ogenyaneni, while renovating eight offices at Mpakeni, Msogwaba, Luggedlane, Nkambeni, Mdluli, Mjindi, Makhosoke II Kings Cluster, Kgarudi, and eSandleni.

160. For the 2026/27 financial year, the department plans to construct three new Traditional Council offices at Lekgoetla, Kgarudi and eSandleni.

161. Two offices, Enikwakuyengwa and Ebutisini, will be renovated, while fencing and paving will be installed at four offices, namely Sethlare, Thabakgolo, Mashilane, and Makhosoke II Boundary Wall.

### **Building a capable ethical and Developmental State**

162. **Madam Speaker**, through tackling corruption, promoting social cohesion, protecting critical infrastructure and improving service delivery, we are building a state that works for all.

163. We are transforming government at all levels through professionalisation of public service, building responsive state institutions, ensuring municipality accountability and strengthen anti-corruption measures.

164. The District Development Model is producing tangible results. Our strategic intent of integrating all plans from all spheres of government in the three districts has produced 255 catalytic projects to the value of R131, 8 billion.

### **Healthy families and healthy communities equals a Healthy Mpumalanga Nation**

165. **Madam Speaker**, a healthy nation depends on a healthy workforce, which in turn relies on healthy individuals and communities. This is a key driver of economic growth, social stability, and prosperity.

166. Healthy nations enjoy low worker absenteeism, highly committed employees, and generally happy citizens.

167. I am proud to report that the ANC-led government has fulfilled the majority of the commitments we made last year, and in several areas, we have exceeded our own targets.

168. Where challenges have arisen, we have not retreated; instead, we have developed clear remedial plans to address shortcomings and accelerate delivery.

- Neonatal mortality rate, babies who die within 28 days of birth in our facilities has dropped from 80 per 1,000 in 1994 to 13.6 per 1,000 in the Second Quarter 2025/26, this means that we are saving more lives than before.
- Maternal mortality rate, women's deaths during pregnancy, while giving birth or within 42 days after giving birth, remains a challenge. However, we are intensifying awareness

campaigns and encourage earlier clinic visits during pregnancy.

- Mpumalanga is on course to achieve all United Nations 95/95/95 HIV/AIDS targets. Efforts will continue to reach and exceed targets for those defaulting on treatment.

169. The Peer review shows 286 out of 290 clinics, have attained ideal clinic standards, however we will continue with implementation of quality improvement plans so that all hospitals meet ideal hospital standards.

170. Last year, we committed to filling vacancies in hospitals and clinics: 2 024 health care professionals and 121 doctors have been appointed across all three districts,

171. As indicated earlier 25 doctors are permanently placed in primary healthcare facilities. We are bringing doctors to where people live, improving timely access to care, reducing unnecessary referrals to hospitals and promoting primary health care.

172. Mental healthcare remains a serious challenge. Statistics show many citizens experience depression or anxiety disorders at some point. To strengthen mental health services, we have appointed Registered Counsellors, Social Workers, Clinical Psychologists, and Occupational Therapists have been deployed to Community Health Centers and surrounding clinics.

173. **Madam Speaker**, social infrastructure, clinics, and hospitals not only improves the quality of life but also drive economic growth by enhancing human capital, employment, and addressing poverty and inequality.

174. Last year, R1.7 billion was allocated to health infrastructure, with R183 million for maintenance of existing facilities. Mapulaneng Regional Hospital is planned for completion this year.

175. Other ongoing projects include Kwamhlanga Hospital Maternity Unit, New Troya Clinic, New Dumphries Clinic, MN Cindi Clinic, Barberton Clinic, Alexandria Clinic, Lebohang Clinic, Vezubuhle Clinic, Kinross Clinic, Langkloof Clinic, Lefisoane Clinic, and the upgrade of Siyabuswa CHC.

### **Social Development**

176. **Madam Speaker**, we are pleased with the announcement by His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa that the Special Relief Dispensation Grant will be extended.

177. We are equally pleased by the STATS findings that all our social grants combined have drastically reduced the poverty rate in our province. We will continue to support the most vulnerable in our communities and further contribute to poverty alleviation.

### **Education and Skills Development**

178. **Madam Speaker**, the era of get-rich-quick schemes, fuelled by social media and speculative investments, cannot replace the lasting value of education and skills development. Education provides sustainable livelihoods and career resilience that no temporary scheme can offer.

179. Our government invests billions annually in education to equip learners with skills for a changing world. Our campaign, *Rhandza Xikolo Xawena – Leave No One Behind #BabizeBonke*, ensures that no learner is excluded.
180. Early Childhood Development (ECD) remains a top priority, forming the foundation for lifelong learning. Children exposed to ECD are more likely to succeed academically and socially. Over 70,000 children are subsidized to access ECD programs through 1,300 registered community centers, while 69,221 Grade R learners are enrolled in public schools.
181. Through the School Health Services 18,287 Grade R learners have been screened for barriers to learning. The programme of professionalizing Grade R Educators is bearing fruits with 1 729 out of the total of 2 034 being qualified.
182. To improve reading for meaning thousands of foundation-phase teachers have been trained in reading strategies for English and African languages. As part of our efforts to retain and improve the learning capacity, 67,221 learners are benefitting from scholar transport, while over 1 million learners benefit from the No Fee School Policy and School Nutrition programs.
183. As a result, the throughput rate, that is learners starting Grade R and completing matric has improved to 67%, which is above the national rate of 64%. This is a remarkable achievement.
184. As part of promoting Ubuhle buzile e-learning programme in our rural schools, Government has distributed 60,000 tablets to Grade 12 learners and we are rolling out tablets to 80,000 Grade ten learners.
185. Multiple sanitation, water, classroom expansion, and school construction projects are underway or completed, often in partnership with businesses.
186. In the previous State of the Province Address, we made a firm commitment to prioritise the upgrading and replacement of 53 aging, community-built schools across our province.
187. I am pleased to report that we have already commenced with the construction of 29 new schools, of which ten will replace old community-built schools. This means we now have 43 schools remaining under this commitment. During the current financial year, an additional 10 schools will be constructed, including the much-anticipated school for the deaf and blind.
188. To further fast-track progress, we are introducing a special programme to build 10 more schools, implemented in phases, each comprising two blocks of eight classrooms. Through this accelerated approach, we are steadily eliminating old and unsuitable learning environments and restoring dignity to our learners and educators.

### **Gender Based Violence and Femicide**

189. **Madam Speaker**, Gender-Based Violence and Femicide remain a grave concern in our province and across the country. The statistics are deeply worrying hence the President has declared it as a national disaster.

190. We are becoming a nation at war with itself, with violence occurring inside our bedrooms, dining rooms, and kitchens, and sometimes even extending into our workplaces.
191. The rising number of murders committed by intimate partners is both concerning and unacceptable. GBV and Femicide destroy families and communities. Behind every statistic is a woman or a child whose life may never be the same.
192. Families are left to cope with psychological trauma, often manifesting as depression, anxiety, self-isolation, a sense of worthlessness, and anger. Mpumalanga has taken a leading role in scaling up the response to combat the scourge of GBV-F.
193. In the past nine months alone, 2,048 victims of crime and violence have accessed psychosocial support services. Awareness campaigns have reached 68,457 people across the province, conducted in collaboration with stakeholders including the NPA, HAWKS, SAPS, civil society structures, and all provincial departments.
194. To ensure victims receive security and protection, the province funds 22 victim support centers run by NPOs, with two shelters owned by government.
195. I am pleased to report that Mpumalanga has met the 2022 pronouncement of the Honourable President that each province should have a shelter in every district. In fact, our province has more than two shelters per district.
196. During the 2025/26 financial year, 494 victims were accommodated in these shelters, including 23 victims of human trafficking. Additionally, the province is working closely with the National Gender-Based Violence Command Centre, and communities are using this toll-free number to report cases, with 26 reports received in the past nine months.
197. We are also preparing to roll out the GBVF Brigade project, which will assign 554 youth to 90 policing precincts to assist with GBVF programs. These brigades will conduct community assessments on the prevalence of GBVF cases, make referrals, and promote awareness programs.
198. While GBV often happens behind closed doors, there is always a friend, relative, or neighbour who may be aware of a potential violent situation. We urge our communities not to ignore the signs of GBV that are visible to all. We cannot continue with an attitude that says *izindaba zabantu asizingeni*, or *impi yomndeni ayingenwa*. Turning a blind eye is not nation-building.

### **Culture, Arts Sports and Recreation**

199. **Madam Speaker**, our cultural and creative industry is of critical importance to us and is one of the vital components of our economic drivers in the province. It fosters social cohesion, promotes innovation and supports micro, small and medium industries and contributes significantly to our tourism.

200. Our signature events like Mpumalanga Cultural Experience celebrates our rich cultural heritage, artistic excellence, and diverse traditions. The event attracts people from inside and outside the province. Our capacity to host big sporting events such as rugby, soccer games and gold panning have been proven beyond doubt.
201. The province will be building the Sports arena here in Mbombela to promote indoor sports and better conferencing facilities. What we are lacking, and we are working on is the International Conference Centre. We are currently preparing an investment package that will be attractive to potential investors.
202. **Madam Speaker** for the first time in our province's history, Mpumalanga will host a globally sanctioned professional tennis event under the banner of the International Tennis Federation (World Tennis Tour), alongside a nationally sanctioned event by Tennis South Africa.
203. The Mbombela Open will deliver a series of events across the 2026 season, firmly positioning tennis as a new and sustainable tourism market for Mpumalanga. Players from over 26 countries will converge in our beautiful province while local players are also given access to compete on home soil at world-class level.
204. Madam Speaker, It is with great honor to announce the inaugural Premier's Cup that will build up from school sport league that feature young talents in soccer and netball both at schools and out of school for the first year.
205. The apex of this tournament will be a premier cup competition to be hosted at the Solomon Mahlangu Stadium in the Thembisile Hani Local Municipality during the PSL off-season.
206. The competition will feature the four professional and semi-professional teams from our province, showcasing local talent and strengthening the development of football in Mpumalanga.
207. We are also proud of the remarkable strides demonstrated by our two local teams, **TS Galaxy FC** and **Casric FC**, following their qualification for the quarter-finals of the **Nedbank Cup**. After defeating formidable opponents, **Mamelodi Sundowns** and **Orlando Pirates**, respectively.
208. We wish both teams every success as they prepare for their encounters this coming weekend. We firmly believe that history has a way of repeating itself, and that the Nedbank Cup will once again be brought back to the Province of the Rising Sun.

### **Geopolitical Tensions between USA, Israel and Iran:**

209. The escalating geopolitical tensions between the USA, Israel, and Iran reached a critical peak as witnessed in the past weekend. This conflict has immediate and severe implications for South Africa's economy and international standing.
210. President Ramaphosa has condemned the "illegal and provocative" strikes, calling for an immediate UN-led dialogue. We have seen Iran losing its supreme leader Khamenei and other senior officials while USA also lost some of its military members.

211. These tensions have direct impact on the South African economy as our fuel prices may increase, currency volatility with the rand facing renewed selling pressure to the dollar and travel disruptions as international flights were cancelled at OR Tambo, Cape Town, and King Shaka airports due to airspace closures over the UAE and Qatar which will affect international business trading and tourism in South Africa.

### 2026/27 Priorities

212. **Madam Speaker**, we have taken important decisions to drive strategic, evidence-based development. I will appoint a Premier's Advisory Panel of eminent experts, to guide us on strategic investment interventions, trade, and provincial economic development.

213. Our partnership with the university of Mpumalanga especially on agricultural production, research and human capital development is a game changer. Mpumalanga will never be the same again.

214. Our total investment on our economic and social infrastructure over the medium term period will exceed R4 billion. We want to see improvement in maternal mortality rate and a significant increase in the number of hospitals that have reached an ideal hospital standard.

215. We will continue to build more clinics, additional classrooms, and new schools particularly in areas experiencing rapid population growth, to ensure that our people have access to quality healthcare and education services close to where they live.

216. This year our country will hold local government elections, and we expect all municipalities to be fully prepared to ensure that the process is conducted efficiently, lawfully and transparently.

217. There shall be no compromise on municipalities that are failing in their core responsibility to deliver basic services to the communities.

218. For the 2026/27 financial year, a total of R1.4 billion from the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant and Water Services Infrastructure Grant has been earmarked to fund additional high-priority projects.

219. New projects planned for the 2026/27 financial year include the Kamhlushwa Packaged Plant with bulk sewer and water lines in Nkomazi Local Municipality, the Brendan Village Bulk Water and Sewer Line in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality, and the Hospital View Access Road with bulk sewer and water lines in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality.

220. We must find better ways of dealing with GBV and Femicide. We will mobilize our communities against crime and GBV and make this scourge a number one priority.

## Conclusion

221. **Madam Speaker**, anyone who wants to deny that the ANC led government in this province has made enormous strides on a number of fronts is suffering from self-denial, However, we all know that the sound of one tree falling does sometime drown the evidence of a thousand trees that are silently growing.
222. But we are not going to stop planting more trees of progress and development just because of that one noisy tree. The challenges facing our people remain their lived experiences, unemployment, poverty, flood damages, drought, water shortages and many others.
223. The statistics I have presented to you today show that these challenges are being attended to and there is serious progress. These challenges must not lead us to despair, they should inspire us to work even harder and employ collaborative approach that will produce tangible positive results.
224. Our work of building a better Mpumalanga remains unfinished. This will only be accomplished if all of us can one day look back with pride and satisfaction and declare that in Mpumalanga;
- No child goes to bed on an empty stomach
  - No baby and or mother dies before, during or after labour on our healthcare facilities
  - No young person is left behind on skills development and technological advancement.
  - No citizen is deprived of his or her human rights including clean piped water, dignified sanitation, electricity and a safe and secure environment
  - No girl child misses school because of lack of sanitary towels
  - Economic benefits of Mpumalanga are shared by all those who live in the province
  - The land is also shared by all our citizens
  - Jobs are created and small and informal businesses are supported and are thriving and
  - corruption is uprooted from our government.
225. Working harder and smarter, united by our common purpose and our single mindedness and a vision of a prosperous Mpumalanga, we can and we shall overcome our obstacles and build a better province.
226. My fellow public representatives, government officials and captains of both large and small industries, I invite you to begin now, to work diligently here in Mpumalanga. When the sun rises, we must rise with it, committed to working hard for the progress and prosperity of our province.
227. “As an old African proverb reminds us, *“The dawn does not come twice to wake a person.”* A new beginning calls on us to rise with purpose, courage, and a shared determination to shape our future together. Sebakanyana s, Le motsotsonyana o, Modimo o refile
228. God Bless Africa, God Bless South Africa, God Bless Mpumalanga Province
229. **Inkomu, Ngiyabonga, Siyathokoza, Ndiyabulela, Ke a leboga, Baie Dankie, I thank You**

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