



LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Department
SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE
OFFICE of the MEC

SPEAKING NOTES DURING THE BATTLES OF MUTALE AND LIMPOPO VALLEY COMMEMORATION BY THE ACTING PREMIER, NAKEDI KEKANA

30 JUNE 2023

Programme Director

- Your Excellencies Ambassadors and envoys from Cuba, Bryan Brito Tanzania, Major general Salimu Milanzi Tanzania High Commission Zimbabwe Angola and Mozambique
- Vhembe District Executive Mayor Clr Dowelane Nenguda and all the Mayors present here
- Magoshi bo Khosi Thovhele Tshikundamalema na Khosi Mutele
- ANC and its Leagues
- Representatives of the MK Military War Veterans at National, Provincial and District level, the Provincial Coordinator Col Mashudu Masindi the Chairperson Gen Rapholo also representing the SACP and the entire committee
- Dean Farisani PEC SACP and the Veterans league. Together with judge Mahombela hails from this Area
- Leadership from various Dpts in the province HOD DSAC, Chief Director Ike Thema
- Religious fraternity Bafundzi Mbedzi
- Families of our Fallen heroes
- The Wrd Clr, Clr Phungu and all the Clrs present here
- Colleagues, friends and the community of Masisi
- Media fraternity

We are here today not to celebrate, but to commemorate the freedoms that we so enjoy today. It is almost 50 years since the 1976 revolution, when Students in Soweto protested against the usage of Afrikaans as the Medium of instruction which saw thousands of them being brutally killed by the Apartheid regime.

This culminated into the widespread of uprisings across the country, where hundreds of young activists died in that revolution. Most of these young people skipped the country and went to exile where they joined the ANC military wing Umkondo weSizwe and received the most sophisticated trainings in the countries which Some of them are here with us today. It is this very corridor across the Limpopo valley where some of these trained cadres are here with us today, while others have unfortunately lost their lives in this same valley.

We are also here today, and we are reminded that 68 years ago, the Congress of the People gathered at Kliptown outside Johannesburg on June 25 and 26, 1955 to chart a way forward to what would be South Africa today the document which the Apartheid regime regarded it as a communist document and today it had found its expression in the Constitution of the democratic republic of SA.

Today in 2023, we must ensure that the ideals in the Freedom Charter are realised through the actions of an active citizenry who take part in participatory democracy and hold the public administration and private sector accountable in order to maintain a high level of ethical standards and curb the scourge of poverty, unemployment and the inequalities which Millions of our people especially the youth are still experiencing.

Program Director

The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture is tasked with the responsibility to preserve the history of the heroic deeds of the June 1976 detachment and the wars of struggle meted against the apartheid regime.

We have started recording this history through our provincial and National Heritage Council and the Military War Veterans. We are also developing a Liberation War route which stretches from Tjate in Sekhukhune through to the University of Limpopo and this valley of Tshitanganzimeni where we are today. All those places were most of the battles against apartheid regime and most of those fighters are here with us and will retell the stories of their heroic deeds.

Allow me Programme Director before I get into the details of where we are today to give a brief synopsis of the rich history of Limpopo province, the ancestral province which saw many battles of resistance against our colonisers and the apartheid regime under the colonisation of the special type.

Allow me Program Director to remind this August Audience about the famous battle at Phiring in 1838 where Kgosi Sekwati defeated the President of the ZAR republic Francois Burgers.

Years later in 1879 Kgosi Sekhukhune also humiliated and defeated the Boers for the second time in the battle.

Hosi Makhado also led the Vha-Venda people in many battles against colonialism which led to the renaming of the town Louis Trichard to General Makhado while Hosi Nghunghunyani also fought wars against the Portuguese.

We also unashamedly witness the bravery of bo-Kgosi Makgoba and Kgosi Malebogo who used guerilla warfare tactics against the Boer invaders while ,Piet Potgieter, the Boer Voortrekker commando commander was killed in a month long battle with the warriors of the Kekana led by Mokopane and the town Potgietersrus was named after

General Mokopane a great fighter of the Ndebele people after the 1994 democratic dispensation.

Our history program Director is rich in battles that must be celebrated and I have just named a few battles fought in the north of our country.

Those who fought in the battle of Mutale River the history that I'm going to share with you today, followed in the footsteps of the great African warriors who fought apartheid colonialism.

Program Director

On The morning of 28 March 1988 a battle ensued between the then Venda Defence Force(VDF) and the nine persons of MK unit between the ages of 19 and 21 at the Mutale River, not far from here, A small land called Tshitangadzimeni an island which became a battle field.

The VDF called for reinforcements from the then South African Defence Force (SADF) and helicopter gunship were deployed which ended in the demise of 5 of the 9 MK guerrillas and several armies from the Defence Force. Three of the MK survivors include Duma Mlambo, James Sekgale are here with us today.

We are glad that besides the special training these young men received from Cuba, Angola, Russia and other countries, some of those who debriefed them are here today. We send special thanks to South African national Defence retired colonel Mashudu Masindi who was part of the MK machinery in Zambia and Zimbabwe at the time. He is also here with us today.

We are aware of the many challenges these military veterans face today. Our freedoms were not as free as some of us think. Sweat and blood, torture and incarceration were the order of the day. The Department of Military veterans has to move with speed with the incentives that are owed to these heroes.

Program Director

Let us remember this brave young lions of June 16 detachment and let the battle of Mutale River be an inspirational for today's generation of our young people.

We must call on young people to join the army to arm themselves with a variety of skills. The army is not just a place to learn how to shoot with weapons. Soldiers of today build bridges as engineers, they are medical practitioners, communications specialists, constructors, economists and many other skills.

We must call on the youth to swell the ranks of the South African National Defence Force and in the memory of the gallant fighters of the Battle of Mutale River help defending our country.

Program Director

We are not naïve of the plight of today's generation of youth and their needs. The youth gathered here may not necessarily be aware of what happened 47 years ago in 1976 or 35 years ago in 1988. Today's generation faces a new enemy than the Afrikaans language. Their enemy is poverty, unemployment and disease. They need economic freedom today, not tomorrow.

We are here today not to make promises, but to assure these youth, that the war veterans you see here today, fought exactly for that, economic freedom. We are here to assure you that instead of a meaningless monuments of stones and decoration, we want to build a tourist attraction that will bring jobs and economic benefit to this place.

We also wish to thank the communities and traditional leaders, who some are here today. These communities became the eyes and ears of our heroes when they moved through villages across the Limpopo valley. Well, we all know that some of them were not as patriotic and they were compromised by the system. In their gullibility they sold out and that's why many of our cadres were killed here.

In conclusion, I wish to send accolades to the veterans who sit here before us, they not only sacrificed their lives, but their youth and some with their sanity. Most of them never recovered and still bare the scars of the battles fought around here.

We also wish to thank the families who lost many of their children to the war against apartheid. Some families here are still waiting for their sons and daughters who will never come back. We wish to thank veterans like Rev Dr Tshenuwani Farisani who when deployed to Limpopo from National Parliament in 1997, assisted a long in tracing the bodies of the 5 who killed here, and many others on a mission to unbury them. Their unmarked graves were found at Mbaleni Graveside near Thohoyandou and Tshikota Graveside near Louis Trichardt.

We thank you Dr Farisani and the first Premier, Adv Ngoako Ramathlodi and many others who are here with us today.

The question we should continue to ask and remind ourselves as we close youth month is, " tomorrow people, where is your past?

I thank you