

**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY EXECUTIVE MAYOR CLLR
KEAMOTSENG STANLEY RAMAILA UPON HIS ELECTION
DURING THE INAUGURATION OF THE 5TH COUNCIL ON
THURSDAY 02 DECEMBER 2021 AT THE AGRICULTURE
HALL IN GROBLERSDAL**

Newly elected Honourable Speaker of Council, Cllr Julia Mathebe,

Newly elected Honourable Chief Whip of Council, Cllr Kgwediebotse Chego,

Newly elected MPAC Chairperson, Honourable Cllr Choris Phokoane,

Fellow Honourable Councillors,

Our esteemed traditional leaders, Magoshi A rena, Maaparankwe,

Mayors, Speakers and Chief Whips of our 4 local municipalities,

MEC for CoGSTA Honourable Basikopo Makamu,

Members of the Limpopo legislature present today,

Municipal Manager, Mme Maureen Ntshudusane and your team,

Municipal Managers from our local municipalities,

Former Executive Mayors of our district municipality, Comrade Dr Namane Dickson Masemola “Gobsese” and Comrade David Shoes Magabe ‘Mogobo a’ Hlabirwa’.

Leadership of the governing party, the African National Congress in the Region, as led by Acting Secretary Comrade Tala Mathope, and leaders of other parties represented in council.

Esteemed guests and family members present.

Veterans of our liberation struggle.

Leaders of the faith based organisation and traditional healers.

Business and organized labour fraternity.

Fellow Comrades.

Our friends in the media.

Setshaba sa Thulare ka moka, seo theeditsego diya-
lemoyeng, le go dikgokaganyo tsa tirelo leago.

Thobela,

It is with utmost humility, a sense of privilege and profound honour, that I stand before you as the fourth democratically elected Executive Mayor of Sekhukhune District Municipality, in the majestic land of our living and passed ancestors.

I must thank my political home, the mighty African National Congress, for entrusting me with these duties.

I would like to congratulate our newly elected Speaker of Council, Honourable Cllr Julia Mathebe,

Let me also congratulate our newly elected Chief Whip Kgwediebotse Chego and not forgetting the newly elected MPAC Chairperson Cllr Choris Phokoane,

Colleagues, your willingness and humility for availing yourself to serve our people in your new responsibilities, attest to the

servant leadership attributes we were taught in the Congress Movement.

Thank you !

Honourable Councillors, congratulations to all of you, on your election as public representatives.

Let me also thank all the people of Sekhukhune who took part in the November 1st local government elections.

Your participation in the elections, irrespective of the political party of your choice, helps to strengthen our democratic project.

On behalf of the African National Congress, on which you have reaffirmed your confidence, to fast-track the provision of services you truly deserve, we want to express our sincere gratitude.

Thank you very much !

As the people, you are the truest custodians of our democratic order.

Honourable Councillors,

The people of our district have spoken.

They have chosen us as their public representatives. Through the ballot, they placed us here to champion their needs.

Seated here today, carrying different political mandates we derive from various political parties, namely: the majority party the **African National Congress**, official opposition, the **Economic Freedom Fighters**, the **Democratic Alliance**, the **Bolsheviks Party**, the **Socialist Agenda of Dispossessed Africans** and the **South African Maintenance and Estate Benefeciciaries Association**, let us keep in mind that at the center, is the people of Sekhukhune district.

They did not elect us to fight one another. They voted for us to put their needs above everything else.

This, honourable members, places upon our shoulders enormous responsibility to live up to their legitimate expectations.

And their expectations are reasonable.

Many of our people simply want water.

Batho ba ga bo rena ba nyaka meetse.

Even though they are aware of the historical neglect by successive colonial and apartheid governments, which built no water infrastructure for them, they don't want excuses.

Our people simply want to see us working toward providing them with this all-important service-WATER.

During the campaign period, people expressed frustration at the unsatisfactory speed of services in their communities.

While in general they acknowledge progress made by the ANC led government in undoing the pre-democratic legacy of neglect, they expect us to do even more.

In the main, their major talking points were really about water, roads, electricity, unemployment, crime, and corruption. This is confirmed by an African giant, writer and political leader Amilca Cabral, who said, and I quote “ **Always bear in mind that people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone’s head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children**” Closed quote.

If the voter-turnout during the recent local government elections is anything to go by, our people are running out of patience.

Millions of eligible voters protested by staying away from voting, and surely this is not good for our participatory democracy.

It is up to us, through our commitment to serving them, who must restore people’s trust in their elected public representatives.

By electing us, those who showed up at the polls, have put their trust in us. And we must never betray them.

THE COVID-19 AFTERMATH

Honourable Speaker,

As we all know by now, the world is grappling with one of the major pandemics human beings have ever faced.

The COVID-19 pandemic devastation has left on its trail, joblessness, hopelessness, orphans, and many other ills in our communities.

In every village or town, and even workplaces, we all know someone who has died of this disease.

We take this opportunity to send our condolences to families, friends and colleagues who lost their loved ones.

Sadly, COVID-19 is showing no signs of disappearing anytime soon.

We are now battling a new variant called Omicron, which is spreading like wildfire.

The daily death rate due to Covid-19, which only was standing at 6 on Sunday, jumped to 25 on Monday, 21 on Tuesday and yesterday it stood at 28.

The positivity rate is also rising exponentially.

Our highly rated and world class medical scientists have assured us, and this is backed by evidence, that people who are vaccinated do not develop severe Covid-19 complications.

The government is therefore urging all South Africans of eligible age to vaccinate free of charge at public health centers.

Children over 12 years are also urged to vaccinate against COVID-19.

Equally important, we must continue observing non-pharmaceutical precautions such as social distancing, wearing of masks, and sanitizing of hands, even if we are vaccinated.

Honourable Speaker,

While government's response to the pandemic, including at our district, was commendable, as it had to strike a balance between life and livelihood, our task of mitigating against the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 is still huge.

Through a variety of economic intervention measures, we must create a conducive environment that will create opportunities for business investment and job creation.

ON THE DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The District Development Model, which provides a roadmap that seeks to integrate planning and implementation efforts at all spheres of government, inclusive of the private sector and stakeholders such as communities and traditional leadership, is a major intervention.

This One Plan model will go a long way in strengthening Intergovernmental Relations and improve integrated planning and delivery across the three spheres of government with the district as the focal point of government and private sector investment.

We will plan and work with local municipalities, the business community, including farmers, the mining fraternity, the tourism sector, and entrepreneurs across the board.

Their active participation is as vital as life blood, because without them, government alone will never attain its developmental agenda.

And its pursuit of total economic emancipation for the majority will remain a pipe dream.

We are going to advocate for the active participation of young people in strategic sectors of our economy.

Young people in our district must be encouraged and supported to take up opportunities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, artificial intelligence, and the internet of things.

We will encourage them to develop interest in entrepreneurship and start-ups and embrace opportunities in the informal economy.

ON THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE

Honourable Speaker,

We are delighted that the FetakgomoTubatse Special Economic Zone (FTSEZ) is finally coming into fruition and once operational, will accelerate the manufacturing base, promote industrialization, and attract investments to our district.

It will undoubtedly be a game-changer of the socio-economic landscape and will create opportunities particularly for ordinary people in our district.

We are encouraged that our provincial government, under the stewardship of Honourable Premier Chupu Stanley Mathabatha, has allocated R35 million in the current financial year to get the much-needed planning and coordination work underway.

THE FUTURE OF THE SEKHUKHUNE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Honourable Councilors

The first council took the decision to establish a municipal development agency as a special vehicle purpose to drive local economic development.

The Sekhukhune Development Agency (SDA) was officially established in the 2009/2010 financial year through a by-law enacted in line with section 86 of the Municipal Systems Act.

Over the last decade the agency has sought to identify catalytic projects aimed at crystallising its unique proposition in the local and regional economic development value chain.

However, most of the projects and programs remain concepts and largely at the planning stages.

The 4th council then subsequently opted to keep the agency as opposed to closing it down.

This was largely premised on the fact that a significant literature and body of research recognize the strategic location of development agencies and their advantage as unique players in the economic development ecosystem.

The agency has been tasked to play a leading role in strategic and high impact projects such as the special economic zone, skills development, tourism development & destination marketing , manufacturing, agriculture and agro-processing to mention but a few.

As the 5th council , we need to engage, on how we capacitate, capitalise and reposition the agency to have the necessary impetus as a special purpose vehicle for economic development.

We need to retain the role of the agency in the context of the district development model and economic recovery plan.

Part of the immediate practical support includes, capacitating the agency in terms of financial and non-financial resources.

We must also invest in the process of creating independent capacity for the agency so that there is a clear distinction between the agency and the shareholder-which is the district municipality.

More importantly, we must ensure that the agency is allocated specific functions in line with its mandate.

As the 5th Council, amongst our priority areas is to ensure that we clearly locate and define the role of the agency in strategic regional projects such as the Jane Furse township establishment, Fetakgomo Tubatse Special Economic Zone, the De Hoop and Flag Boshielo Dams resource management plans, and the implementation of social labour plans among other things.

Equally important, is to ensure that we strengthen good corporate governance, financial oversight and performance in the agency.

The financial sustainability plan needs to be finalized as a matter of urgency so that the agency is able to be self-sustainable in the medium to long term.

Honourable Councillors,

On the same note, I am sad to announce that the acting CEO of the SDA, Mr Kgopelo Phasha, has left the institution.

His last day in the employ of the agency was on Friday.

Kgopelo has been an incredible asset to this institution, and the district municipality, having brought youthful exuberance and amazing ideas.

We are indebted to his commitment and hard work, which he demonstrated over the years as he grew within the ranks of the district municipality.

As he takes his new responsibilities elsewhere, we are encouraged by the fact that he is not lost to public service.

And we are confident he will represent us well and hopeful that our paths will cross again.

RELOCATION OF GOVERNMENT OFFICES

Honourable Speaker,

Since the dawn of democracy, the provincial government offices has always been located in another district.

This has disadvantaged the people of Sekhukhune, who were forced to travel to Lebowakgomo, which is located in the Capricorn District, to access government services.

But now the good news is that those offices are relocating to their rightful district.

The MEC of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dr Namane Dickson Masemola has intervened and the relocation process is well underway.

ON CORRUPTION

Honourable Councillors,

The residents of our district are tired of having their district municipality hogging media headlines for all the wrong reasons.

They have had enough of this embarrassing news of millions of rand which are meant to provide them with services, disappearing.

Fellow residents of Sekhukhune, we want to assure you today, that we will NOT tolerate corruption and maladministration.

No one.

Absolutely NO ONE, is entitled to steal from our people-irrespective of positions they hold, their social or political standing.

As President Cyril Ramaphosa has remarked, and I quote:
“Voters have sent a clear message that we need to focus on governance, on ridding [municipalities] of corruption and maladministration, and on making sure that services are provided reliably and affordably.”

The African National Congress in its election manifesto has outlined an array of interventions on how we must deal with corruption.

Among other things, they include:

Dealing decisively and immediately with corruption, mismanagement, waste, and under-performance,

Removing from office those who fail to do what they are paid to do,

Implementing the “step-aside” rule for those in the ANC that have been charged with corruption or other serious crimes,

Focusing on ethics and corruption risk management and stronger protection of whistle-blowers, and

Overhauling government procurement to make it transparent, and act speedily against officials conducting business with the municipalities and those implicated in maladministration.

Honourable Members, let it be clear.

This is not a threat of a purge. Many of our municipal officials are dedicated, hardworking and ethical and they have absolutely nothing to worry about.

But those who have their hands in the cookie jar, must know that their days are numbered.

Honourable Speaker

There are three major criminal cases which we have reported to the police for further investigation.

The first one is the deposit of R5.4 million into fraudulent bank

accounts by our officials. Disciplinary action for misconduct against two officials is still underway.

One was found guilty on three counts of gross misconduct and we await sanctions, while the fourth official was found guilty of negligent supervision and was given a warning.

Additionally, we have opened a case of fraud with the police and here is a case number: 57/07/2018.

Of the R5.4 million, we have managed to recover 90 percent of it.

Honourable Speaker,

In the second case, an amount of R12 million meant for the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act was fraudulently deposited into a wrongful bank account, again by our officials.

An internal investigation recommended that three senior managers be charged. One of them was demoted after he pleaded guilty to misconduct and was demoted to a lower position. While two others are no longer employees of the municipality, we hope the police will intensify their criminal investigation regarding their involvement in this matter.

A case of fraud was opened with the South African Police Services, and here is the case number: 119/13/2019.

We have not recovered this money.

In the third case, an invoice was duplicated and an amount of R139 000.00 paid twice into the account of a service provider. The Financial Misconduct Board is investigating and we await a report. But we have opened a police case for criminal investigation and here is the case number: 105/04/2021.

Lastly, Honourable Speaker,

We successfully obtained a court order to stop the unlawful awarding of appointment letters for COVID-19 relief water projects.

We conducted an internal investigation, but before the former CFO could be charged, he resigned.

Even though we did not lose money in this case, we have cooperated fully with the Special Investigating Unit who are investigating his matter.

While we appreciate and understand that the police and the SIU operate independently from the district municipality, we are however, dissatisfied that not a single person has been arrested and prosecuted.

We still have faith and confidence in our law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system. For this reason, we remain hopeful that they are making meaningful progress in their criminal investigation.

ON FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Honourable Speaker,

Our district municipality is in a good financial position and is meeting its financial obligations.

The governing African National Congress has now given us marching orders to reposition our municipality by among other things:

Strengthening measures to generate revenue and improve revenue collection,

Increase and ring-fence money for the maintenance of infrastructure,

Reduce unfunded mandates as a matter of urgency,

Ensure that we spend our allocated capital funding without fail,

Undertake effective campaigns to deal with the culture of non-payment for services, but ensure that we deliver the necessary free basic services to those who cannot afford to pay, and

Attain clean audit outcome.

ON WATER INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEMES AND PROJECTS

Fellow residents of Sekhukhune,

Our district municipality is currently implementing several bulk water infrastructure schemes and projects.

While there is notable progress on several of them, we admit that in some instances the delays have been a cause of frustration to you.

For the financial year that started in July this year, Council approved an annual capital budget of just over R400 million.

A large bulk of this allocation is set aside for the Municipal Infrastructure Grant, which seeks to unlock service delivery bottlenecks, with a special focus on water and sanitation.

By being sworn in as councillors, we have essentially signed a contract with you, the people of Sekhukhune.

We are committing to ensure that you get value for money.

PRIORITY WATER SCHEMES AND PROJECTS

The following water schemes are top on the priority list.

- 1)Moutse West & East Bulk Water Supply Scheme:
- 2)Lebalelo Bulk Water Supply Scheme:
- 3)Flag Boshielo Bulk Water Supply Scheme:
- 4)Nebo Plateau Bulk Water Supply Scheme:
- 5)Olifantspoort South Bulk Water Scheme:
- 6)Groblersdal to Luckau Bulk Water Schemes:
- 7)Cabornatites to Zaaiplaas Sub-Bulk Water Schemes:

This administration will give them a special attention, because we believe once they are unlocked, they will reverse the water challenges faced by our communities.

Honourable Speaker

One of the things we are going to do with immediate effect, is to strengthen the performance monitoring and evaluation functions in the Office of The Executive Mayor.

This will be done with a purpose of increasing accountability regarding all aspects of water schemes and projects, including planning and design, implementation, and project management.

Communities will be updated regularly about progress, including causes that delay completion of bulk water schemes and projects.

We will do this as part of ensuring that citizens receive information about services they deserve as outlined by one of the Batho Pele Principles.

But we will also do this to strengthen our participatory democracy and active citizenship.

We are making a special appeal to various stakeholders, including emerging businesses and pressure groups, not to disrupt projects which are meant to service our people.

We acknowledge, that as government we must comply with legislation such as the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act Number 5 of 2000, which compels us to

prioritise local businesses, particularly those owned by youth and women.

However, in the process, we must not disrupt projects and operations.

On Gender Based Violence

Honourable Speaker,

Vulnerable sections of our society live in constant fear.

Ours is a country that is at war with women and children.

We condemn all acts of gender-based violence and femicide that continue across our country.

As of last week Thursday 25 November until Friday 10 December, we are in the 16 Days of Activism for no Violence against Women and Children Campaign.

Also known as the 16 Days Campaign, this is a United Nations campaign that takes place annually.

The theme for 2021 is “The Year of Charlotte Maxeke-16 Days of Activism-moving from awareness to accountability.”

It therefore means, all of us have a duty to end violence against women and children.

We call on South Africans to work together with police to ensure perpetrators of gender-based violence are brought to book.

We also encourage victims and those who observe or suspect any form of abuse to report such to the GBV Command Centre on the toll-free number: **0800 428 428**. [That number again is **0800 428 428**].

Honourable speaker,

With the powers invested in me as the 4th Executive Mayor of Sekhukhune District Municipality in terms of the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 section (60), sub-section 1, I hereby take this opportunity to announce members of the mayoral committee who will assist the Executive mandate as follows:

1. Community Services

Cllr Bella Kupa

2. Planning & Economic Development

Cllr Maleke Mokganyetji

3. Corporate Services

Cllr Orginia Mafefe

4. Budget & Treasury

Cllr Frank Ratau

5. Infrastructure & Water Services (IWS)

Cllr Kukie Sefala

6. Two Deputy MMCs for IWS

Cllr Mathale Mabatane

Cllr Merriam Malatji

7. Youth

Cllr Jan Mohlala

8. Women, Children and People living with disability.

Cllr Baatseba Leshaba

I have designated Cllr Orginia Mafefe as leader of Government Business.

Honourable councillors,

I have total confidence in these men and women, that they will perform to the best of their abilities. I am sure, that working together with you, honourable members of this august house, and members of the community, we shall indeed take services to our communities.

Madam speaker, let me take this opportunity to congratulate the newly appointed members of the mayoral committee and wish them well in their duties.

As per the directive of the African National Congress, all members of the mayoral committee will sign performance agreements with the Executive Mayor.

In Conclusion:

Honourable councillors, we have no time to waste.

Let us put our shoulders to the wheel and ensure speedy delivery of services to our people.

Borrowing from Martin Luther King Junior, and I quote: **“If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk. If you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.”**

Thank You very much.