

**STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS BY
THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF
SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY
HONOURABLE CLLR JULIA LATA
MATHEBE**

**VENUE: GA-MASEMOLA STADIUM
DATE: WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL 2022
TIME: 11H00**

Honourable Speaker, Kgwediebotse Chego

Honourable speaker of the Provincial
Legislature Rosemary Molapo

Honourable members of the Provincial
Legislature, Jerry Maseko, Advocate Rudolph
Phala, Rebeccah Sono, and Rodgers
Monama

The Chief Whip of Council

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Section 79 and Section 80 Committee
Chairpersons

Honourable Councillors

Honourable Speakers of Local Municipalities

Honourable Mayors of Local Municipalities

Our esteemed Maapara Nkwe
The Secretary of the African National
Congress in the Sekhukhune Region, Tala
Mathope
Leaders of the Tripartite Alliance
Leaders of Opposition parties,
Esteemed guests,
Municipal Manager and senior managers,
Chairperson of Sekhukhune Development
Agency Board
Board Members of the SDA
Acting CEO of the SDA
Representatives of organised labour
Employees of our district municipality
Our friends from the media fraternity

Fellow residents of the mighty Sekhukhune
District,

Thobela.

Honourable Speaker,

We are meeting today exactly fourteen days before the 28th anniversary of our democracy.

For the first time on 27 April 1994, the majority of South Africans elected the government of their choice.

These were the people who for many years had been marginalised in the land of their birth.

The vote came after decades of a struggle which the people had waged to emancipate themselves from apartheid oppression.

The fight for our freedom displaced many families and destroyed lives.

Ours is a freedom that was nourished by the blood of the oppressed people who wanted to be recognised as human beings and one such gallant fighter was **Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu who on 6 April 1979, aged 23,**

was executed, but his spirit unbroken by the long time he had spent in the shadow of the gallows, he said and I quote: **“My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom”** close quotes. Indeed, we are free today, but the freedom was never free.

In the same breath, on Sunday the 10 April 2022, we marked exactly **29 years since Chris Hani was assassinated outside his dawn park home in Boksburg on the 10th of April 1993 by Janusz Walus and Clive Derby Lewis.** We will never forget what Apartheid did to us.

We emerged from the clutches of the authoritarian regime, to build a country anchored on the principles of a democratic, non-sexist, and non-racial society that respects human rights.

Today we remember the liberation torchbearers such as John Langalibalele Dube, Sefako Makgato, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, OR Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Peter Nchabeleng, Ester Maleka and many others.

We also dip our revolutionary banner to the millions of South Africans who stood their ground in the face of the evil regime.

Honourable Councillors

Our thoughts and prayers are with a 41-year-old woman from our district.

She delivered a set of twins at Jane Furse Hospital last week, but unfortunately, the twins are cojoined at the chest and abdomen.

At this time of confusion and difficulty, we are putting our trust on our medical scientists for assistance and our Maker to provide wisdom.

Honourable Speaker

Allow me to take this opportunity to express appreciation to the people of Sekhukhune District.

It is now four months since they elected us as councillors.

They made it clear that they are unhappy with the slow pace of service delivery.

I would like to state that we are aware of your difficulties.

We fully understand the seriousness of water and sanitation service challenges you are faced with in your various communities.

Honourable Speaker,

I am confident that I speak on behalf of all of us in this august house, that, despite our different political affiliations, our collective interest is to provide proper services to the people of our district.

The services our people elected us to provide, are not favours.

But they are entitled to receive them, as part of the basic rights and freedoms afforded to them by our democratic order.

We therefore want to assure our fellow residents, that we are working tirelessly to fulfil the commitments we made to them.

We commit never to take for granted, the trust they vested in us.

One of the **Batho Pele Principles** requires that we provide full, accurate and up to date information to the people, about services they are entitled to receive.

This is the type of information that will enable them to assess our performance as public representatives.

We are using this State of the District Address to account to you as the residents of Sekhukhune district.

Our major function as the district municipality is to provide water and sanitation services, along with emergency services.

The delivery of the State of the District Address coincides with public consultations for the Integrated Development Plan.

This is a blueprint which this term of Council will implement to improve the conditions of our communities over the next five years.

Anchored on the District Development Model, our IDP seeks to chart a new approach towards the developmental agenda of local government.

The District Development Model coordinates all spheres of government behind a single vision of planning, budgeting, and implementation.

To this effect, we have identified the following Six Mayoral Strategic Priorities:

- 1) Provision of water and sanitation services in a sustainable manner,
- 2) Local economic development, growth and job creation through agrarian reform, mining, tourism, and repositioning of the Sekhukhune Development Agency,
- 3) Good governance and sound financial management,
- 4) Sustainable land use management and spatial transformation,
- 5) Community development, social cohesion and nation building, and
- 6) Public participation, stakeholder engagements and partnership.

Honourable Speaker

We want to use this opportunity to acknowledge that the pace of service delivery in our district is not pleasing.

The water service and sanitation infrastructure backlog remain stubborn.

As is outlined in section 152 of the Constitution, the objectives of local government are, among others, to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities.

Fellow residents, in February when we accepted the responsibility to serve you, we committed to pursuing a sound, efficient, effective, transparent, and accountable administration.

We recognise the importance of good governance, and that without it, our municipality will not function properly to meet your needs.

We are disappointed to announce that we obtained **Qualified audit** opinion for the previous financial year.

We have asked the municipal manager and her management team, working together with the Audit Committee, to attend to all issues raised by the Auditor-General.

Management must meet every week to attend to all these issues raised by the AG and will report progress to the Mayoral Committee every month.

But on a more positive note, we want to take this opportunity to congratulate all our four local municipalities and the Sekhukhune Development Agency for attaining **Unqualified Audit** opinions.

Honourable Speaker

I want to be very clear on this one.

We will not tolerate corruption, fraud, and maladministration.

These criminalities are the biggest enemies of our people.

They steal from the poor.

They deny our people services which the democratic government seeks to provide them with.

Last week Council granted a request by the Executive Mayor, to institute a forensic investigation in our district municipality.

We want to put a stop to the thieves who are lining their pockets at the expense of our people.

The forensic investigation will mainly focus on three issues.

- 1) Infrastructure and service delivery,
- 2) Governance and organisational capacity,
and
- 3) Municipal finances.

For a long time, the people of our district were told that their money disappeared into wrong

bank accounts.

They deserve answers.

And this forensic investigation will get to the bottom of all these allegations that have damaged brand Sekhukhune.

Council has given the forensic investigation six months to complete the work. The process of appointing the independent investigators is now underway.

Honourable Councillors,

Despite all these challenges, we are steadily working on the restoration of sound financial management.

This is made possible by implementing effective, efficient, and economical supply chain management processes and contract management.

As we pursue a system that is fair, transparent, competitive, and cost-effective, as is required by legislation in the

procurement of goods and services, we are now able to account for all bid documents that we receive.

We have successfully centralised the receiving point of invoices, which enables us to monitor the payment process.

As a result, we are now able to pay all the valid invoices within the stipulated 30 days period.

This removes the frustrations on the part of our service providers.

Our municipality should not be the reason why service providers, particularly small and emerging business collapse and go bankrupt because of late payment.

We have a mandate to support local economic activity because this creates job opportunities for our people.

HONOURABLE COUNCILLORS,

His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa recently announced the ending of the National

State of Disaster. This decision was informed by the slowdown in the Covid-19 infection rate.

But while this is the case, we would like to alert our people that this does not mean the corona virus has disappeared.

And now with the relaxation of restrictions such as social gatherings and the fact that sporting facilities are open, we encourage people to continue observing Covid-19 protocols.

The Covid-19 vaccine has proven to be efficient in protecting people from severe illness and even death.

The government is still providing these vaccines free of charge at health centres. Please vaccinate so that you can improve your chances to defeat the corona virus.

We also want to make a call to society to stop the abuse of vulnerable people such as the elderly, women, children, and people living with disability.

All of us must take a stand against gender-based violence. We also urge those who are being abused or witness abusive actions against others, to report such to the police and social welfare authorities.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER

To achieve the six **Mayoral Strategic Priorities**, we would require a workforce that is alive to these imperatives.

We appreciate the fact that majority of our employees are dedicated, and willing to go an extra-mile for the betterment of our communities.

However, our challenges our enormous.

I want to emphasise that all of us should pull in the same direction and go beyond the call of duty if our efforts are to have impactful effect.

We are in the process of realigning the organisational structure of the municipality. This process will refine our resolve to becoming a leader in service delivery.

Some of the key changes we are making include the introduction of the position of Chief Operations Officer. The successful candidate will among other duties, coordinate planning and supervise all daily operations and activities of the municipality.

This will allow the Municipal Manager to focus on the establishment and maintenance of a strategic management system to achieve policy objectives, developmental and service delivery obligations.

We will also fill critical vacancies in the Infrastructure and Water Services Department, including that of Director, with qualified and competent people.

To enhance compliance and monitoring functions by the Executive Mayor, we will establish a full unit that will keep tabs on progress regarding projects we are implementing.

Honourable Speaker,

Since democracy, the government has provided free basic services, including water and electricity to poor households, in areas where infrastructure is available.

Even though government had good intentions with this policy, unfortunately some of us are abusing it.

There are residents in our communities, who even when they have the financial means, still do not pay for services.

Another thing that worries us is that several business establishments, including some government departments, do not pay for water services.

Ironically, they all expect us to give them uninterrupted provision of water supply and other services.

Our debt book by the end of March was at R329 million. This is the money that our municipality is owed.

The biggest culprits are the households who owe us R280 million. Businesses owe us R37.5 million, and government departments owe us R9.3 million.

Others such as NGOs and churches owe us R1.1 million.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS

There can be no argument, that this is counterproductive to our efforts to efficiently maintain the existing infrastructure.

If this trend is not arrested, it is just a matter of time before the entire infrastructure network collapses.

This is not the situation we can afford.

We want our money!

If you know that you owe us, please pay up or make payment arrangements, otherwise we are coming for you.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER

As per the commitment of the governing party's election manifesto during the recent local government elections, we will strengthen measures to generate revenue and improve on debt collection.

We will undertake effective campaigns to deal with the culture of non-payment for services. Every person and organisation that affords, must pay for the services. Failure to do so, hampers our plans to expand water services to areas where they do not exist.

For some time, we have been sending letters to our debtors reminding them about their debts.

We will soon pay a visit to those who continue to ignore us.

To demonstrate our seriousness in this regard, we have already begun to implement this internally.

All our staff members were recently informed that, in line with applicable legislation, the district municipality may deduct from their salaries, outstanding water and sewage payments that are in arrears for more than three months.

There is no reason why a similar fate should not fall on us as councillors in all the municipalities.

As councillors and municipal staff members, we must lead by example.

To optimise billing and collection of rates, we must keep up with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

We are now in the process of exploring the feasibility of installing smart meters to improve revenue collection.

Honourable Speaker,

Another core function of our district municipality is to provide sanitation services.

Over the past five years, we managed to build 9 447 VIP toilets across all the local municipalities.

Through the **Vuk'uphile Learnership Development** programme, we have trained approximately 50 learner contractors, to fast track the provision of sanitation services.

The learner contractors are currently building 7004 VIP toilet units across the district. We expect them to finish this work by the end of the current financial year in June.

In addition to building VIP toilets for our communities, the learnership development programme aims to improve the gradings of emerging contractors into fully fledged contractors.

This is part of our efforts as government to capacitate small and emerging businesses to compete with established business.

Honourable Members

Our country faces a crisis of unemployment.

This is a matter that must concern all of us.

The situation was even made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, as about two million people lost jobs during the hard lockdown.

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey released on 29 March by Statistics South Africa, official unemployment rate rose to a new record high of **35.3%** in the fourth quarter of 2021.

Of the 7.9 million unemployed persons, as many as 51,6 percent did not have matric, while those with matric are at 38,6 percent.

Only 2,4% of unemployed persons are university graduates, while 6,9% have other tertiary qualifications as their highest level of education.

This data shows that, as part of fighting unemployment, we must encourage young people to finish matric.

As government and social partners, we must avail bursaries to eligible learners and students

to pursue tertiary education, with a special focus on skills required by the job market.

This is matter we will give serious attention, including to engage social partners.

Honourable Speaker

Last month, a group of 30 young people, mainly females, graduated for their training in plumbing and artisanship.

They were trained for 18 months at the Sekhukhune TVET College, through a partnership between the National Youth Development Agency, the Sekhukhune District Municipality, and the Collins Chabane School of Artisans.

All of them come from our district.

As the district municipality, we additionally placed them in our Water Treatment Plants and depots, to do their practical.

This has assisted them to acquire the work experience and to be ready for the job market,

both in the private and public sector, of as entrepreneurs.

Honourable Speaker

Effective local economic development is widely recognised as a tool that reduces poverty and unemployment. Municipalities have a unique role in attracting private sector investments.

To fulfil this imperative, the municipality created the Sekhukhune Development Agency.

It was given a mandate to act as engine for economic development and business activity to create job opportunities.

This would be achieved by facilitating the promotion of high impact projects, and to seek investments and partners, both in the country and abroad.

However, the reality is that since its founding, the SDA has not lived up to this mandate.

We have had serious discussions about the self-sustainability of the agency.

Our predecessors surely had the good intentions.

But the agency must take the lead.

As matters stand, the agency is dependent on the municipality.

We are working on allocating it sufficient funding so that it can appoint Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and Company Secretary.

But honourable Speaker, it is important to mention that the SDA has already embarked on bringing financial mobility consultants on board.

They will assist the Agency with sourcing of funds for the implementation of high impact projects.

These consultants will package and develop business plans on the identified projects to be implemented in the near future.

The sourcing of funds come about as a vehicle to ensure that the agency delivers on its mandate of creating and facilitating high-impact projects as well as investment promotion within the district.

However Honourable Speaker, importantly, this arrangement between the SDA and the consultants will strictly be on a 100 percent risk free basis.

In simple terms, neither the SDA nor the district municipality will pay the consultants for this.

Instead, they will receive a commission based on the value of the investment they secure for us from development fund institutions and the capital markets.

Honourable Speaker,

The FetakgomoTubatse Special Economic Zone is heading in the right direction.

The SEZ is an economic development tool that seeks to promote national economic growth and exports by using support

measures to attract targeted foreign and domestic investments and technology.

The FetakgomoTubatse SEZ is designated to be in the Steelpoort area.

It is targeting various sectors including mining & mineral beneficiation, manufacturing, renewable energy, agriculture & agro-processing, pharmaceutical and medical, automotive as well as business process outsourcing.

With a total investment value of R45 billion, the FetakgomoTubatse SEZ is set to create nine thousand job opportunities in six years and twenty thousand in ten years.

Honourable Members

The world is now shifting towards the electric vehicles.

Electric vehicles are not just a wave of the future, but instead they will take over sooner than many of us think.

Britain's luxury vehicle brand Jaguar recently announced that it will sell only electric cars from 2025, and VOLVO from 2030.

Ford says all vehicles sold in Europe will be electric by 2030 and VW says 70% of its sales will be electric by 2030.

Our district cannot be left behind this technological movement.

The manufacturing hub of electric vehicles project in our district is gaining momentum.

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement in 2019, the investor who is already on board now has letters of commitment from commercial banks and a letter of support from the provincial government to proceed with the project.

The SDA on behalf of the district municipality holds a 25 percent equity stake.

The district municipality has invested R1.5 million, through the SDA, into the initial phase

of the project for the training and incubation of 25 local SMMEs.

The training will commence before the end of July this year.

With the price of petrol increasingly on the rise, the electric vehicles herald a new era for motorists.

From next month (May 2022) the manufacturing of the experimental electric vehicle will start.

Once it is completed and has passed all the standard tests and regulations, it will pave a way for mass production and the ultimate establishment of dealerships.

Once the project is fully up and running, it will manufacture electric vehicles including panel vans, passenger vehicles and ultimately buses.

This project will be a source of the much-needed job opportunities and will equally capacitate SMMEs in our district.

Importantly, the manufacturing hub for the mass production will be located at the FetakgomoTubatse Special Economic Zone.

Honourable Members

In our other effort to give small businesses in our district a boost, earlier this month we launched the inaugural SMMEs and Cooperatives Development Fund.

This initiative aims to provide both financial and non-financial support to small businesses. Partnering with the Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator of the Sekhukhune TVET College, successful applicants will be given support through incentives and incubation.

While every application will be assessed on merits, we are placing special attention on businesses in the Agriculture, Mining, Tourism and Manufacturing sectors to enhance production capacity.

We have set aside R2 million for this project and we are targeting to empower over 20 businesses.

WATER SCHEMES AND PROJECTS

Honourable Speaker

Last month we held a strategic session to assess overall performance of the municipality and to induce fresh ideas to optimise performance.

The session was attended by Speaker of Council, Chief Whip, Members of the Mayoral Committee, Mayors of local municipalities, honourable councillors of our district municipality from majority political parties.

We put aside our ideological and political differences with a sole purpose of turning this municipality into a leader in the provision services for our communities.

One thing we all agreed on was that the Infrastructure and Water Services Department is in a **“trauma unit.”**

What is more concerning is that this is the heartbeat of our municipality.

The high employee turnover and the fact that critical positions within the department remain vacant, contributed to the incapacitation of this department.

We agreed that we require a dedicated session to dig deeper into the problems that cripple this department.

Our district municipality receives various grants for the purpose of providing basic water and sanitation services to the communities.

These include the **Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG)** the **Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant, (RBIG)** and the **Water Services Infrastructure Grant (WSIG)**.

Currently we are implementing several water schemes and projects, using these grants.

Although some of these schemes were delayed over the years, in various instances

and phases, parts of them have reached practical completion.

Flag Boshielo Water Treatment Plant

The upgrading of the Flag Boshielo Water Treatment Plant was completed and commissioned in September last year. The plant was previously only able to purify 8 megalitres of water per day.

Its capacity has now been upgraded to purify 20 megalitres, providing water to 156 villages, many of them in the Ephraim Mogale Local Municipality.

What is now remaining is for us to implement the **Water Conservation and Water Demand Management Strategy** to promote water use efficiency.

In simple terms, residents in those 156 villages must avoid filling storage tanks, or the so-called JOJO tanks with water. People who use water excessively in this manner, are taking the allocation of their fellow residents.

And even with the upgrading of the treatment plant, sooner or later the system will fail to provide adequate water to everyone in the area.

A re ithuteng go shomisha meetse ka hlokomelo.

Jane Furse

In October last year, we successfully commissioned and handed over the Jane Furse RDP Package plant project to the community.

The state-of-the-art package plant now supplies water through standpipes inside 1000 households, at the Jane Furse RDP section.

The community of Phaahlamanoge Village was also handed over a water project in October last year.

Our appeal to the residents there and everywhere else, is that they must protect their infrastructure from vandalism.

Theft and vandalism of our water service infrastructure unnecessarily cost the municipality money, which we could be using to take water services to other communities.

Instead, thieves and vandals are stealing from our communities.

We are appealing to our communities to inform us and the police, to stop the sabotage of their infrastructure.

Jane Furse Bulk Pipeline

The longstanding contractual dispute involving the municipality, the consultant and contractor, regarding the Jane Furse Bulk Pipeline is finally over.

We are now in the process of appointing a service provider to commission this 18km bulk water pipeline from Ga-Malekana Water Treatment Plant to areas in Jane Furse.

The successful commissioning of this pipeline will unlock many projects which are

dependent on it in the area, many of which are near completion.

These include the laying of a 24.5 km bulk pipeline from Makgeru to Schoonoord, and the construction of a 10 megalitre reservoir. Overall progress on this project is at 90 percent.

Moutse Bulk Water Scheme

The completion of the Moutse Bulk Water Scheme is also long overdue.

It was also delayed by a contractual dispute that was before court. However, the municipality and the consultant ultimately found each other, and work has resumed.

Practical completion of the overall project is at 90 percent.

Much of the infrastructure construction, including the command and service reservoirs and bulk pipelines, in many villages of Moutse has been completed.

Bulk pipeline projects connecting Bloompoot village and Lusaka Reservoir is at 100 percent.

Similar projects from Lusaka village to Mpheleng village, and from Mpheleng village to Matlala Lehwelere village are at 100 percent.

In villages such as Matlala Ramoshebo, Matlerekeng/Rathoke and Spitspunt, we are at over 84 percent, and in some areas at 88 percent.

The upgrading of the Groblersdal Water Treatment Plant, from 18 megalitres to 34 megalitres capacity stands at 95 percent.

The upgraded Groblersdal Water Treatment plant will supply purified water to the Moutse bulk line.

Mooihoek Bulk Water Scheme

The laying of a 4.9 km bulk water supply pipeline constructed in Alverton is complete.

Also, construction of a 500 Kilolitre concrete reservoir in Alverton is complete and tested.

Work to test the pressure of the bulk pipeline extending to about 3 500 metres is ongoing.

Honourable Speaker

There are several projects that the municipality is implementing, which are nearing completion.

Bulk water and reticulation projects in the two villages of Ga-Maroga and Motlolo are at an advanced stage.

Six of the eight concrete reservoirs are practically complete, and the installation of metered standpipes in nearly two thousand households is ongoing.

We are working tirelessly to ensure that these projects will give the people of Ga-Maroga and Motlolo portable water by May next year.

A similar project, wherein we are doing household connections, is happening at Motlailana Village. The installation of metered standpipes into 127 households and the

assembling of a 100-kilo litre steel tank are fully completed. We are now working with Eskom to equip and electrify one of the two boreholes.

We are also making progress in the Lebalelo South project, which includes villages such as Ga-Riba, Ga-Ragophala, River-Cross, Madiseng, Maeseng and Mandela.

In this multi-project, physical progress in the construction of reservoirs, reticulation network which includes installation of standpipes, and the laying of bulk pipelines ranges between 89 and 99 percent.

Honourable Speaker,

Operation Tlema Tekkie-Re Nwe Meetse has taken off.

Our priority is to unlock the projects that have been delayed, so that we can turn our attention to other areas.

Honourable Councillors, in conclusion.

In the next two days we will celebrate Good Friday and the Easter Weekend.

Although we hope to spend time with family and friends during this time, often, it turns out to bring tragedy to many families.

With an increase of traffic volumes, and the rush to reach various destinations, chances of road accidents and fatalities are high.

We urge all road users, motorists, and pedestrians alike, to obey road regulations. Above all, we urge them to be patient with one another on the roads.

You would rather arrive late, than not at all.

Do not put yourself in a position wherein you are the cause of someone's death.

On that note, I wish you and your loved ones a safe Easter Weekend.

Thank you.

Ends

