

**ADDRESS BY MEMBER OF THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE, MR NORMAN MOKOENA, MPL, DURING A SNAP DEBATE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2014 AT THE GOVAN MBEKI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, GERT SIBANDE DISTRICT.**

**Thursday, 06 March 2014**

Honourable Speaker, Mr SW Lubisi;  
Honourable Premier, Mr DD Mabuza;  
Honourable Members;  
Distinguished guests;  
Members of the media;  
Ladies and gentlemen;

Our country **South Africa has indeed come a long way in redressing the imbalances created by oppression.** 20 Years on after attaining Freedom and Democracy, we remain the world's model of how to shift power from the hands of the oppressors without shedding any drop of blood. We continue to be regarded as beacon of hope on the continent and internationally, in the promotion and protection of human rights.

This has been realised through the *Bill of Rights*, in our country's progressive Constitution – which is a cornerstone of South Africa's democracy. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of **human dignity, equality and freedom.**

Chapter 2 section 10 guarantees **human dignity**, stating that *“Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected.”*

Honourable Speaker;

It is through our Constitutional mandate which guarantees the protection of Human Rights, that we were able to realise the Freedom and Democracy we are celebrating today.

Indeed we have a good story to tell:

- We have a strong electoral system, firmly established in the last 20 years with global respect for our ability to conduct free and fair elections, by ensuring that all citizens exercise their right to vote and choose the government that represents their will;
- The ANC-led government has ensured that basic social services are extended to all those previously denied, including piped running water, housing, electricity, health services, education and welfare – thus ensuring the provision of Human Rights to our people;
- In particular, our people continues to appreciate the efforts of the ANC-led government through the success of the social grant system which has made a vast difference in the lives of the marginalized;

- Under the ANC-led government, discrimination in economic and social activity on the basis of race, gender, disability or sexual preference has truly become the exception rather than the rule.

Honourable Speaker;

Indeed ***South Africa, and in particular Mpumalanga, is a better place to live in than it was before 1994.***

As we celebrate the **2014 Human Rights Day** which is marking the 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, and at the same time the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Freedom and Democracy, let us do so in remembrance of all those who shed their blood for this great a human achievement. Let us do so by paying homage to Africa's oldest liberation movement, the mighty ANC, which was born with the aim of striving and ultimately realise out emancipation.

The **Human Rights** which we are enjoying today, as enshrined in the Bill of Rights of our country's progressive Constitution, did not come without sweat and shedding of blood. That is why we must continue to jealously guard against human rights abuse, as appreciation for the sacrifice our liberation stalwarts, including Madiba, have made.

As the black nation, we have regained our dignity – our Human Rights – hence the ANC-led government continues to safe guard them.

Honourable Speaker; Honourable Members;

***All South Africans have good reason to celebrate the benefits attained through freedom.***

This is indeed a good story to tell:

- Under the ANC-led government, we are celebrating the restoration of the right to human dignity and equality for all;
- We can express pride in our unifying symbols and national heritage;
  
- We are able to raise our voice in celebration of our peaceful settlement and reconciliation in the country;
  
- We are celebrating our country's ascendance into the international arena of states and shedding the (pariah) legacy of the past.

Indeed ***South Africa, and in particular Mpumalanga, is a better place to live in than it was before 1994.***

Despite all these achievement over the past 20 years, we acknowledge that we still have a long way to go in improving the lives of all South Africans. This is because:

- Unemployment remains high due to the structure of our economy and worsened by the skills mismatch in our country;
  
- The quality of our education needs to improve so that we produce the highly skilled individuals we need to grow our economy;

- Our health sector, while making significant strides in arresting the spread of HIV/AIDS, is still struggling to cope effectively with the widespread burden of diseases;
- Crime is still unacceptably high and corruption seems to be a growing challenge;
- Rural development, including use and ownership of land still remains a challenge.

Like tat'u Nelson Mandela said, “*Yinde lendlela esihambayo!*” – the Long Walk continues in earnest.

It is therefore our intention as the ANC-led government, once our people renew their social contract with us through the ballot on May 7, to continue to fight the stubborn triplets, namely, poverty, unemployment and inequality.

As the ANC-led government, we call on all South Africans to celebrate living in a country that guarantees that never again will our humanity be taken from us, irrespective of race, gender, creed or sexual orientation. Never again, shall any Human Right be trampled upon.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that our human rights record and history are preserved and strengthened for future generations.

Indeed, we have a good story to tell - ***South Africa, and in particular Mpumalanga, is a better place to live in than it was before 1994.***

It is therefore our plea to all South Africans, to go back to the polls on May 7, and vote for their caring liberation movement, the African National Congress. Our track record speaks for itself, and I believe that no one can dispute that.

Honourable Speaker;

I believe you will agree with me that ***Together We Move South Africa Forward.***

*Yinde landlela esihambayo!*

Happy **Human Rights Day** in advance.

I thank you!