

SPEECH DELIVERED BY HON H.D.YAWA AT THE OFFICIAL WELCOME CEREMONY FOR DR LECHUTI AS A PASTOR OF THE FULL GOSPEL CHURCH OF GOD IN MATLOSANA ON 27 AUGUST 2006.

The Regional Overseer for Bophirima Region of the Full Gospel Church of God-Pastor Colleen Mahlangu

President of South African Ministers Fraternal and Bishop of the Independent Congregational Church-Bishop FD Matebesi

The Executive Committee and Members of SAMIFRA

Bishops and Pastors

Pastor Lechuti and family

The Congregation at large

Programme Director in 1st Peter Chapter 5 verse 2-4 the Almighty commands thus, " Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

Shepherding in Bible times was no part-time fair-weather affair. Ancient shepherds actually lived a sheep's lifetime in the pasture with the flock.

When a tiny lamb was born into his wilderness world, among the first sensations felt by the shivering lamb was the tender touch of the shepherd. And the shepherd's gentle voice helped awaken the lamb's delicate eardrums.

The shepherd protected the lambs, talked to them, caressed them, and led them to the fresh pools and luxuriant pastures, day and night. By the time the lambs reached "ewe-hood" or "ram-hood" they completely relied on that one shepherd and followed his voice and his alone. That is how flocks were formed.

I am told that this is how spiritual flocks are formed today as well. People naturally gather around a loving, serving Christian who nourishes their faith, guides them, protects them, and affirms them with affectionate touch and loving word.

Government as a shepherd of the masses of our people in the infancy of our democracy still face critical challenges such as the reduction and eradication of poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment, addressing race and gender inequality in the distribution of opportunity, income and wealth, and creating the caring and equitable society that will guarantee the dignity of all our people, including children, the youth, women and people

with disabilities, within the context of a truly democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society.

To achieve these goals requires that we have a strong economy that generates the resources we need. For this reason, throughout our 12 years of democracy, government has paid close attention to the performance of the economy.

In this regard, among other things, we have sought to ensure that:

- Our economy grows at high and sustainable rates, essentially driven by higher investment levels;
- We raise the level of domestic savings to provide the investment capital we need;
- We manage the public finances in a manner that would ensure that the public sector, including the state-owned enterprises, contributes to the growth of our economy, while doing everything possible to meet the needs of the people, especially the poor;
- We restructure and modernise our economy to improve its international competitiveness, among other things to protect our domestic industry, and increase the export earnings we need to finance the intermediate and capital goods we require to expand our production capacity;
- In this regard, we encourage the growth of the manufacturing and service sectors, resulting in a relative reduction of our dependence on the production and export of raw materials;

- We increase productivity, relying on better skilled workers and the introduction of modern technology;
- We transform the "second economy", elevating it to achieve the level of development enjoyed by the "first economy"; and,
- We reduce the levels of poverty and the historic wealth and income imbalances in our country, rapidly expanding the domestic market.

The church as a partner in the Moral Regeneration Movement needs to continue to play a critical role in ensuring that the moral values of ubuntu such as respect for human life, and respect for each other are inculcated, especially among our youth.

We also see a key role for the church to play in alleviating the suffering caused by disease, especially AIDS. Across the country every day, I still see the churches and religious people and leaders alike taking care of the aged, nursing the sick, feeding and clothing the poor and orphans especially HIV and AIDS orphans. It is crucial for the church to continue to play a role in AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns. We greatly applaud, and appreciate these selfless efforts by the church, for they inspire the nation to greater moral heights.

In the past week, false allegations about South Africa's comprehensive HIV and AIDS programme were made at the International AIDS Congress.

During the Congress, various parties insinuated that the government did not have a comprehensive programme on HIV and AIDS. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Kofi Annan, The UN Secretary General in his Report to the General Assembly Special Session on HIV and AIDS commended South Africa for tripling its resource allocation for HIV and AIDS programmes, since the adoption of the UN Declaration in 2001. Public sector expenditure on HIV and AIDS has increased substantially over the years as it grew from R30 million in 1994 to over R3 billion in 2005/06.

This increased expenditure is making it possible for us to make progress on all fronts, namely, prevention, treatment, care and support of those who are infected or affected by HIV and AIDS.

We look upon the church as a partner to enhance the understanding of our comprehensive HIV and AIDS programme to address any doubts our commitment to the fight against HIV and AIDS.

As government we remain convinced that the Christian Church, like all the other faiths in our country, has the possibility to make a critical contribution to the achievement of the goals of national reconstruction and development.

We are certain that the people's contract to create jobs and fight poverty will be enormously weakened if it does not include within it the Christian Church and the other faiths, pursuing the goals that we have set ourselves as a people.

Your government, the ANC led government regards the church as one of its principal partners as we strive to improve the lives of all our people, especially the poor. Accordingly, we urge the church to continue to use its capacity and infrastructure positively to impact on the process of transformation and change.

I am truly honoured by the opportunity afforded to me to participate in the welcoming function for the servant of God, Pastor Lechuti to Matlosana and wish to emphasise that as government we truly appreciate the partnership with South African Ministers Fraternal and the Full Gospel Church of God for contributing towards the moral regeneration campaign and the reconstruction of our society's moral fibre. It is through our collective patriotic efforts that we can make a difference in the fight against ignorance and moral decay.

In conclusion let me remind Pastor Lechuti of what the Lord says in the John 10:16 "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd". Be the Chief Shepherd's voice in Matlosana and bring other sheep to the Kingdom of God's Pen.

Ke a leboga.