ADDRESS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE CESA LIMPOPO BRANCH VISIT AT MEROPA CASINO CONFERENCE CENTRE, POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY, CAPRICORN DISTRICT

20 May 2026

Programme Director,

MEC for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, Mr Ernest Rachoene,

Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality, Cllr Mamedupi Teffo,

Executive Mayor of Polokwane Municipality, Cllr John Mpe,

Leadership of Consulting Engineers South Africa,

CESA Members,

Captains of Industry,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ndo Madekwana, Thobela, Riperile, Silotshile, Good Evening, Goeie Naand.

Tonight, we gather in a room filled with professionals, leaders and builders of the future. Engineers dream in blueprints. Government dreams of policies. Communities dream of hope. Yet all those dreams meet at one point — infrastructure.

Infrastructure carries the dreams of communities, opens pathways to economic opportunity, connects families to schools and hospitals, and restores dignity to the lives of our people.

That is why this engagement between government and the consulting engineering profession is both necessary and strategic. It is a meeting of vision and expertise. A partnership between those entrusted with public leadership and those entrusted with technical excellence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Government and the private sector are sometimes treated as two separate worlds. But the truth is that these two worlds need each other.

We carry the constitutional responsibility to deliver services and improve the lives of citizens. The engineering profession carries the technical expertise, innovation and professional capacity required to transform plans into reality.

As government, we value the important role played by Consulting Engineers South Africa in shaping the infrastructure landscape of our country.

CESA has become a respected voice for engineering excellence, ethical conduct, sustainable infrastructure development and professional integrity.

Your contribution extends far beyond technical advisory services. You are partners in economic growth, partners in transformation and partners in building a capable developmental state.

Programme Director,

The 7th Administration has placed infrastructure development at the centre of economic recovery, industrialisation and job creation. Our infrastructure investment programme is focused on key sectors that are critical for inclusive growth and long-term sustainability. These include energy generation, roads and transport logistics, digital infrastructure, water and sanitation, agriculture, and human settlements.

In our province, infrastructure remains one of the most powerful tools we possess to confront poverty, inequality and unemployment. We cannot speak about economic transformation while communities remain without reliable roads, clean water, functional schools and healthcare infrastructure. We cannot attract investment into our province while logistics corridors, energy supply and bulk infrastructure remain under pressure.

This is why collaboration between government and the engineering profession becomes critically important.

Programme Director,

The recent floods experienced in parts of our province exposed the urgent need for climate-resilient infrastructure, stronger planning systems and improved disaster preparedness. Roads were damaged, bridges collapsed and communities were isolated. These realities remind us that infrastructure must not only be built for today; it must be designed for the future.

We therefore need engineering solutions that are innovative, sustainable and responsive to climate change realities.

This is where organisations such as CESA become invaluable strategic partners to government.

Your expertise in project planning, quality assurance, engineering standards and infrastructure maintenance can help government avoid costly delays, poor workmanship and unsustainable projects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the greatest challenges confronting many provinces and municipalities is the shortage of technical and engineering capacity within the public sector.

CESA can play a transformative role in bridging this gap through skills transfer, mentorship programmes, secondment opportunities and partnerships aimed at developing young professionals within government institutions.

We are particularly encouraged by CESA's commitment towards supporting emerging firms, young engineers and SMMEs through mentorship, joint ventures and professional development programmes.

Transformation within the engineering sector must not simply remain a compliance requirement. It must become an economic imperative that creates opportunities for historically disadvantaged communities, women and young professionals.

Programme Director,

Government also fully supports CESA's call for quality-based procurement systems.

Infrastructure procurement must never become a race to the bottom where the cheapest tender automatically becomes the best tender. Poor infrastructure delivery ultimately becomes expensive for government and devastating for communities. We need procurement systems that prioritise quality, technical competence, ethical standards and long-term value for money.

Equally important is the need to strengthen integrity and ethical conduct within the infrastructure environment. The engineering profession carries enormous responsibility because the decisions taken by engineers directly impact on the safety, dignity and wellbeing of communities. Engineers must never allow themselves to be drawn into practices that compromise quality standards, undermine compliance or weaken the durability of public infrastructure for the sake of expediency or political pressure. Your professional obligation is not merely to approve projects, but to safeguard public interest through technical excellence, honesty and accountability.

As government, we expect engineers to remain independent, principled and guided by the highest ethical standards. You must not be led by politicians on technical matters; instead, you must guide leadership with professional advice grounded in science, evidence and engineering expertise. Infrastructure built without integrity ultimately fails communities, wastes public resources and erodes public trust. We therefore need a profession that is courageous enough to speak truth to power, uphold quality standards

and ensure that every project delivered becomes a lasting investment for future generations.

Programme Director,

The future of Limpopo depends on our ability to build strong partnerships between government, industry, professionals and communities.

We therefore welcome CESA's continued willingness to work with government in building sustainable infrastructure, improving service delivery and advancing economic growth.

As government, we remain committed to creating an enabling environment for infrastructure investment, institutional reform and collaborative partnerships that place the interests of our people first.

Together, we can build a Limpopo that is modern, connected, resilient and economically competitive.

I thank you.