

**SENATE PRESIDENT - LINDIWE DLAMINI'S SPEECH ON THE ESWATINI
LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE
4-6 JUNE 2025 (ESIBAYENI LODGE)**

***Theme:** "Tinkhundla system of government, one country, one system of local government"*

**Topic; Legislative Priorities: Aligning Government Initiatives with the
Objectives of Eswatini's Local Government Reforms**

Your Royal Highnesses,

Chiefs

Royal Councilors/ Emabandla ekweluleka Bukhosi

Acting Prime Minister (Hon Deputy Prime Minister) Hon. Thulisile Dladla

**Minister of Tinkhundla Administration and Development, Hon. Sikhumbuzo
Dlamini**

Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Hon. Apollo Maphalala

Hon. Cabinet Ministers,

Chief Chamuka VI from The Republic of Zambia; and His Delegation

**Your Excellency Governor Francis Irungu Kang'ata from the Republic of Kenya;
and His Delegation**

Professor Kwamena Ahwoi and Dr. Francis Adams from the Republic of Ghana;

Professor Ndangwa Noyoo

Hon Members of both Houses of Parliament

Excellencies, Members of The Diplomatic Corps and Development Partners

The Learned Attorney General

Regional Administrator

Mayors and Councilors

CEOs and Captain of Industries

Tindvuna Tetinkhudla ne Bucopho

Esteemed Presenters and Panelists at the Conference

Distinguished participants

Fellow citizens of the Kingdom of Eswatini

Ladies and gentlemen

Members of the fourth Estate.

We thank His Majesty King Mswati 111 for the visionary leadership and directing that the government services must be accessible to all citizens in the kingdom following submissions at the National Parliament Sibaya in 2023 and we would also like to thank His government for convening such an important and timely conference.

I also take this moment to acknowledge the esteemed experts and speakers in this conference that are coming from within and outside of our borders. I do not doubt that they will put the necessary building blocks to the success of this proposed legislation.

I stand before you today with both humility and profound reverence for the weight of this moment. As we gather to deliberate on the future of local governance in our beloved Kingdom, we do so not as strangers to history, but as heirs to a long and sacred journey — a journey that stretches back to the reign of King Mbandzeni from 1872 to 1889. One may wonder why I start from King Mbandzeni when we have a dynasty of over 400 years of kingship.

It was during King Mbandzeni's reign era, in a time of great global shifts, that Eswatini began its complex engagement with foreign powers, entering into agreements and concessions that would shape the territorial, administrative, and political framework of our Kingdom. The seeds of duality — the coexistence of indigenous governance and imported administrative structures — were planted in those years, setting in motion a dichotomy that still echoes in our governance today.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Long before the language of "local government" was introduced, Emaswati practiced participatory governance in its most authentic form. The system - conceived by our forefathers, guided by our Monarchs, and nurtured through our chieftaincies - is not an abstract theory, but a lived reality for generations. It is undoubtedly a heritage of ancient wisdom from the nation's forefathers who were inspired by the undefiled values that defined the concept of inclusive community and leadership.

These values guarantee unity, respect, accountability, dignity, and self-determination for all people regardless of individual background and circumstance. This is what set us apart as Africans in general, and Emaswati in particular.

The Challenge has been how do we integrate these 'all important' values within modern society that is heavily influenced, and for the most part dictated to, by our unavoidable existence within the "Global Village".

Alongside this deeply rooted system emerged the parallel structures of urban local government — foreign in origin, yet increasingly entrenched as our nation modernized. Two systems, existing side by side, but often disconnected in law and practice. This is the urban-rural dichotomy that we are convened here today to resolve — not by erasing either, but by harmonizing both into a single, integrated system that reflects our identity and serves the needs of every Liswati.

Excellencies,

When His Majesty King Mswati III, under divine guidance and national wisdom, ushered in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Eswatini in 2005, Chapter XIII spoke with remarkable clarity:

"Parliament shall... provide for the establishment of a single country-wide system of local government which is based on the Tinkhundla system, hierarchically organised according to the volume or complexity of service rendered and integrated so as to avoid the urban/rural dichotomy."

For nearly two decades, successive efforts have been made to give legislative expression to this constitutional directive. The complexity of our unique governance philosophy — blending modern administrative frameworks with deeply entrenched cultural systems — has demanded both patience and discernment.

Today, we do not begin — we continue. We continue the journey that King Mbandzeni initiated. We continue the vision that King Sobhuza II defended. And we fulfill the mandate entrusted to us under the reign of His Majesty King Mswati III.

Our task now is to craft a legislative framework that continues to unify these parallel systems into one coherent structure — not by importing foreign models, but by elevating the best of who we are as Emaswati and Africans.

We must legislate for a governance system that:

- Recognizes and protects the sacred role of traditional leadership as the custodians of our culture, our land, and our social harmony;
- Empowers Tinkhundla areas and urban local government to operate within a single, coordinated framework of local governance, where no Liswati is left under-served because of geographical location.
- Provides the financial architecture to match responsibility with resources, ensuring that decentralization is not merely symbolic, but effective and sustainable;
- Ensures that women, the youth, persons with disabilities, and every marginalized group are full participants in the governance of their communities;
- And finally, upholds service delivery, transparency, and accountability as the measure of every institution that serves our people.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates.

Let us be reminded: local government is not about bureaucracies or buildings — it is about proximity to the people. It is the level of government that touches lives most directly. The legislation we are called to develop is not for the comfort of politicians and officials, but for the dignity of our people.

For a mother in a rural chiefdom seeking healthcare;
For a youth in an urban township seeking employment;
For a farmer seeking access to markets;
For a child seeking quality education —

Our work must serve them all equally, whether they live under a Chiefdom or an Urban Local Government.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates:

None of this will be possible without political courage and financial commitment. The passage of legislation is not an end — it is only the beginning. It must be matched by:

- Political unity across government branches, traditional leadership, and local councils;
- Robust financial investment to empower local authorities to fulfill their mandates;
- And sustained institutional capacity-building to ensure that new systems do not collapse under the weight of their own ambition.

We must move forward as one nation — united in vision, committed in action, and anchored in the wisdom of our traditions.

Summary in Siswati

Maswati lamahle,

1. Mine ngibonga hulumende wembube kuhlela umhlangano lomkhulu kangaka we kushiyelana ligwayi sisakha kwetfu.
2. Live limeme tinjula bucopho letivela emaveni lahlukene e Africa: latosihlephulela kutsi bona bakhone njani kutsi kuhlunganisa kusebenta kwemadolobha kanye ne mimango nemiphakatsi kuletsa intfutfuko leyenta lonkhe liswati litivele linakekelekile.
3. Kasicali lokusha sichubeka kulokwacala Enkhosini Mbandzeni lowabusa nga 1872-1889 ngoba lapho kwefika khona labamhlophe emva kwemhlangano lomkhulu lowabanjwa e Berlin nga 1884 —1885 lapho kwahlala emave alabamhlophe ahlephulelana I Africa. Yase iAfrica ibuswa ngulabamhlophe lebeta nemasiko abo ekubusa—kulapho lakwacala khona lomkhatsi wekuphatfwa kwemadolobha kanye nekuphatfwa kwemimango lokwenta intfutfuko yehluke.

4. Inkhosi Sobhuza II, yakubona kuhlupheka kwesive sayo yase itsi akucalwe tinkhundla nga 1955.
5. Ngenhlakanipho yeNkhosi Mswati wesitsatfu wakhiwa Umtsetfo sisekelo leyawubusisa nga 2005- Lowakhiwa ngiso sive-chapter 13 wakhona lotsi: iPhalamende iyakwenta kutsi leli lakangwane kube live linye kepha libe netigungu letinyenti letiliphetse letisekelwe yindlela yekuphatsa yetinkhundla, nato letihlembiswe kahle ngendlela yekutsi kwehlukahluka kwemimango kuletse lubumbano lolungeke ludale kuchekeka emkhatsini wemadolobha netindzawo temakhaya.

Kungako ke silapha ke lomuhla sitocola lentfo yetfu lenhle kangaka, kutophuma umtsetfo lotohlela kutsi lohulumende afike kubantfu nekutsi intfutuko ibe kulo live lonkhe

Excellencies, distinguished guests, as I conclude,

As Senate President, I stand before you not simply as a presiding officer of the Upper House, but as a custodian of constitutional responsibility. I pledge that Senate will tackle this responsibility of legislating not as a routine task of passing laws, but as a solemn duty to shape the future governance of Eswatini for generations to come.

We shall work hand in hand with His Majesty's Government, the House of Assembly, the Traditional Leadership, and all sectors of society to ensure that the Local Government Bill reflects both the spirit of our Constitution and the soul of our Kingdom.

Let us rise to this moment with the wisdom of our ancestors and the courage of our convictions. Let history record that it was in our time that Eswatini achieved the full unity of its governance system — blending tradition and modernity, unity and diversity, past and future — into one strong, sovereign Kingdom.

"We are one nation. We shall have one system of local government. Anchored in Tinkhundla. Grounded in our history. Prepared for our future."

I thank you for your kind attention.