



THE HIGH LEVEL Seminar

Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs (UNISA) in partnership with the Free State Legislature



MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release

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Thabo Mbeki African School and Free State Legislature to Host High-Level Seminar on Local Government, Elections and the Rule of Law

The Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs at Unisa, in partnership with the Free State Provincial Legislature, will host a Community High-Level Seminar on Thursday, 13 August 2026, at the Central University of Technology (CUT) Hotel School in Bloemfontein.

The seminar, themed *“The State of Local Government, Elections and the Rule of Law in the Free State: Advancing Ethical Leadership and Public Service in the Spirit of Mama Charlotte Makgomo Mannya Maxeke,”* will bring together government leaders, legislators, academics, traditional leaders, civil society organisations, and community members to reflect critically on governance, service delivery, electoral integrity, and constitutional democracy in the Free State Province.

The seminar also recognises the enduring legacy of Mama Charlotte Maxeke and the contribution of the courageous women of the Free State, who orchestrated the anti-pass protests of 1913 and 1956.

The seminar will be officially opened with a keynote address by the Speaker of the Free State Provincial Legislature, followed by welcome remarks from representatives of the Central University of Technology and an introduction to the engaged community scholarship of the Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs.

The day’s programme features five thematic sessions covering governance and democratic participation; the rule of law and electoral justice; accountability and service delivery in local government; a reflection on Mama Charlotte Maxeke’s ethical leadership; and a closing panel discussion on building capable and developmental municipalities.

Despite notable democratic gains since 1994, municipalities across South Africa, including those in the Free State, continue to face persistent challenges in governance, financial management, public trust, and service delivery. Recently, the Auditor-General of South Africa announced that no municipality in the Free State Province received an unqualified audit opinion with no findings during the current reporting period.

The seminar seeks to respond directly to these challenges by creating a platform for honest community dialogue and generating practical, implementable recommendations for strengthening local government institutions.

The seminar forms part of a broader strategic partnership involving the Free State Provincial Legislature, the University of South Africa through the Thabo Mbeki African School of Public



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and International Affairs, the University of the Free State, the Central University of Technology, the Free State Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.

The seminar is expected to draw approximately 200 participants, including municipal mayors, councillors, traditional leaders, researchers, student leaders, faith-based organisations, and youth and women's structures.

The Community High-Level Seminar will be open to the media. Journalists wishing to cover the seminar (including receiving links to virtual meetings) should send requests to Kekeletso Chabana KekeletsoM@fsl.gov.za or Tshepo Neito neitota@unisa.ac.za

Members of the public may follow the Community High-Level Seminar live on Free State Legislature Facebook page and YouTube Channel. You may subscribe to the Legislature's YouTube channel to receive instant notification of live feeds.

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