

Eulogy at the memorial service of President of the  
Engineering Council of South Africa, Eng. Lawrence  
Lebea 17 December 2021

Mr Imtiaz Fazel, Acting Director-General,  
Department of Public Works and Infrastructure

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Protocol

Programme Director,

Members of the Lebea Family

ECSA Deputy President, Ms Refilwe Buthelezi

The Minister and Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure in  
absentia;

ECSA Council Members

ECSA Acting CEO, Mr Cox Mokgoro

Chairperson of the Council of the Built Environment

Presidents and Registrars of the Built Environment Professional  
Councils

Members of the fraternal engineering organisations

Leaders of various Associations and representative organisations in the  
Built Environment

Ladies and Gentlemen and Fellow mourners

A dark cloud has descended on the engineering community, and it  
hangs heavy across the entire engineering sector.

Mr Lawrence Lebea and an engineer of note and the President of the Engineering Council of South Africa has sadly departed from this world.

For those of you who worked with him, alongside him, who relied on him for his wisdom, counsel and intelligence, and those who were also led by him it is very sad and a pain too hard to bear that he will be with us no more.

It was a shock to receive the news of the passing of Mr Lawrence Lebea from the Engineering Council of South Africa. The stroke of death has taken the very one who has been our pillar of strength, and a towering figure at this dreadful moment in our country's history when we are experiencing an unprecedented wave of the corona virus which is sweeping through the entire community of nations and its people.

Our people in the engineering sector, in South Africa, on the African continent and the world over are so fearful of the future, they have looked to leaders like Lawrence Lebea for reassurance, strength and fortitude.

As the President of the ECSA, Mr Lebea was the public face of our engineering community and a partner our government was looking up to, to contribute to the required solutions through research and knowledge generation, through policy development and standards to traverse this scourge and any other challenges bedevilling the engineering sector. Mr Lebea's career trajectory has been phenomenal.

In January 1980 he was fortunate to be offered a sponsorship to study Civil Engineering at Mangosuthu Technikon (now Mangosuthu University of Technology - MUT). He was among the first group to study engineering at MUT. He completed the National Diploma for

Technicians (T4) in December 1983 and subsequently worked for one of the big 5 construction companies in SA.

In 1986 he went to the University of Natal (Durban) to further his studies and enrolled for the programme BSC in Civil Engineering. He completed the degree in December 1989. He later registered for the degree of Master of Engineering Management with the University of Pretoria in 1995 as a part time student which he completed in December 1997.

He registered with ECSA as a Professional Engineer in June 1993. This was a great achievement considering that there were mostly white-owned companies that made it difficult for black engineers to get relevant and appropriate work experience. Apartheid was fully entrenched within these white companies and job reservation (for whites) was the policy of the day. Afrikaans was the medium of instruction in most of these companies just to make the lives of black engineers very difficult. He has been involved in engineering for about 40 years with over 36 years post qualification experience.

He gained valuable engineering and governance experience working in the public and private sectors. He held different senior managerial positions in Government; the last being that of Superintendent- General (HOD) of the Department of Public Works, Roads & Transport in Mpumalanga Province. He left government service in May 2002 and immediately established his consulting engineering firm called Mtema Mashao Consulting Engineers (Pty) Ltd (MMCE) and became its CEO, the position he held until his untimely departure. MMCE is now a medium sized consulting engineering firm which specialises in, among

others, Water and Sanitation Engineering, Roads and Stormwater Engineering, Structural Engineering, Geotechnical Engineering, Municipal Engineering and Project Management. Through this company he assisted the South African government with job creation as many unemployed graduates found employment in his company and honed their skills to be effective engineers in South Africa. Through his company he also trained, mentored and coached many engineers, technologists and technicians; most of whom were subsequently registered as professional engineering practitioners by ECSA. Others are currently serving in the different structures of ECSA. He has indeed achieved so much during his life-time hence was the a beacon of hope for many young engineers and engineers from the historically disadvantaged groups.

He held may portfolios at the Engineering Council of South Africa which included that of being the Chairperson of the Central Registration Committee. In this role he was responsible for:

- The oversight of the registration of all engineering practitioners in South Africa and ensured that no blockages were in the way towards the registration of previously disadvantaged engineers.
- Introduction and implementation of the new registration model and reduction of ECSA spending in respect of Registration.
- Restructuring of the registration governance structures.
- Introduction of the new Continuing Professional Development (CPD) model.

- Oversaw mechanisms for the mobility of South African Engineering Practitioners across different jurisdictions by increasing accessibility into National and International registers.
- Represented South Africa at the International Engineering Alliance convention in the United States of America and formed part of deliberations for the future architecture of the engineering profession including protection of the newly introduced registration model.

He was, further to the above portfolio, the Chairperson of the Research, Policy and Standards Committee through which he oversaw:

- The growth of the engineering profession by increasing ECSA disciplines from the original 9 to 11 with the introduction of the Mechatronics Engineering and Computer Engineering.
- The restructuring of the ECSA system for the approval of Approved Professional Persons (APPs) recommendation system and the ECSA Dams Committee.
- The introduction of the ECSA Code of Practice development framework and structures.

The development of ECSA Code of Practice  
i.e. ECSA Overarching Code of Practice.

- The Introduction of the ECSA Policy and Standards Development Framework.

- The continued maintenance of ECSA's international recognition by the International Engineering Alliance (IEA).
- He ensured the mobility of local engineers to other jurisdictions through the development of IEA aligned standards and made it easier for international jurisdictions to tap into local engineering expertise.

In 2020 he was elected the President of the Engineering Council of South Africa and has been in this portfolio until he departed. During his stint as the President he has ensured that ECSA becomes an effective regulator by presiding over the Identification of Engineering Work Regulations which were ultimately gazetted in March 2021. He has brought about requisite stability within Council and lead with humility, ethics and integrity. He was a transformation practitioner par excellence and fully participated in the Presidents 'Forum and in many engineering sector initiatives geared toward the transformation of the engineering sector. He had a passion for engineering and sought to ensure that engineering transforms to be fully responsive to the engineering related needs of the country.

South Africa needs men and women like Mr Lawrence Lebea, who understand and appreciate the country's direction and that the onward march to a better South Africa is better if we work together with a clarity of purpose and direction.

Mr Lebea was greatly respected leader at ECSA, in the engineering Sector and the country as a whole. He was indeed a principled man and a man of courage in time of both calm and difficulty. He was an

honest man who hated corruption and would not hesitate to speak up for what he believed in.

To the Lebea family, friends and ECSA and the engineering profession at large, it could not have been easy losing such towering figure and a gentle soul.

ECSA and the engineering sector must complete what he was not able to finish in his lifetime.

His spirit and work ethics live on.

He was gentle, but could be firm and uncompromising when the occasion demanded.

On behalf of the government of the Republic of South Africa, and the Ministry of Public Works and Infrastructure I express our deepest sympathies and condolences to Lebea family, ECSA and the engineering sector on this great loss.

Rest in power Mr Lebea!!!!!!!!!!

I thank you