Profile of Former President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Kgalema Petrus Motlanthe

Biography

Mr Kgalema Petrus Motlanthe was born to a working class family on 19 July 1949 in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg. Most of his childhood was spent in Alexandra Township while much of his adult life was spent in Meadowlands, Soweto.

Former President of the Republic of South Africa

Mr Kgalema Petrus Motlanthe is the former President of the Republic of South Africa. He was elected by Parliament on 25 September 2008 and he served until 9 May 2009.

During Mr Motlanthe’s Presidency South Africa was the Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Mr Motlanthe assumed the role of Chairperson of the regional body. Working in collaboration with other SADC leaders, he oversaw the implementation of Zimbabwe’s Global Political Agreement.

Mr Motlanthe also joined other world leaders in the G20 and other multilateral bodies to appropriately respond to the global financial crisis. At home he worked with organised business, labour and civil society to minimise the impact of the crisis on South Africa’s economy.

Former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa

After his retirement as President, Motlanthe was appointed by President Jacob Zuma to serve as Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa and he served in that position from 11 May 2009 until 24 May 2014.

As Deputy President, Motlanthe performed various functions including the following:

- Leader of Government Business in the National Assembly,
- Leader of the Anti-Poverty Programme
- Chairperson of the Energy Advisory Council
- Chairperson of the Human Resource Development Council
- Chairperson of the South African National AIDS Council
- Chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Committee 2010 FIFA World Cup

In 2013 he was tasked with leading efforts to stabilise South Africa’s mining sector which was faced with serious challenges.
Mr Motlanthe was also Minister if the Presidency from July – September 2008.

**Political Party involvement**

In the 1970s, while working for the Johannesburg City Council, he was recruited into UMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the then armed wing of the ANC. He was part of a unit tasked with recruiting members for military training.

The unit was later instructed to transform its function from recruitment to sabotage. While some members of the unit left the country, he and others remained in the country to establish such machinery. Their unit was also involved in smuggling MK cadres in and out of the country via Swaziland.

On 14 April 1976 Motlanthe was arrested for furthering the aims of the ANC and was kept in detention for 11 months at John Vorster Square in central Johannesburg.

In 1977 he was found guilty on three charges under Terrorism Act and sentenced to an effective 10 years imprisonment on Robben Island.

After his release in 1987, Mr Motlanthe was tasked with strengthening the trade union movement in the country.

To this end, he worked for the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) as a national office bearer responsible for education. Among other things, he was involved in training workers to form shop-steward committees.

In 1990 when the banning on the ANC and other political organisations was lifted, Mr Motlanthe was tasked with re-establishing ANC structures in the Gauteng Province.

In 1992 he was elected General Secretary of NUM, succeeding Cyril Ramaphosa who had been elected Secretary General of the ANC.

Mr Motlanthe served two five year terms as Secretary General of the ANC from December 1997 to December 2007. As Secretary General he was responsible for the overall operations of the organisation and ensuring that all its structures, including the ANC Women’s League and the ANC Youth League, functioned well.

As Secretary General he was also responsible for the organisation’s international relations programme, which entailed strengthening and consolidating relations with international political bodies and fraternal organisations in foreign countries.

Mr Motlanthe was the Deputy President of the African National Congress during the period December 2007 – December 2012.