

OPENING ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE MOPANI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY CLLR NKAKARENG RAKGOALE DURING THE DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION HELD AT THE KARIBU LEISURE RESORT ON THE 27TH AND THE 28TH OF MARCH 2015

Honourable Speaker

Chief Whip

Members of the Mayoral Committee

EXCO Members from our locals

Traditional Leaders

Councilors

Officials

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

We meet here today with a single intention that of unblocking the bottlenecks and to unravel the complexities faced by our institution in its quest to deliver the much needed services to our people. Our presence here today signifies our commitment to leave no stone unturned in ensuring that Mopani District Municipality becomes nothing but a centre of excellence in discharging its constitutional obligation and mandate. We therefore extend our most heart buried salutations and warm welcome to all.

Honourable Speaker

2015 is a historic year in the calendar of South Africa. It marks the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Charter. The freedom charter remained a living and an inspiring document to many South Africans during the dark days of apartheid. It inspired us that no matter how bad things could have been then, one day freedom will reign in our land. Even after attainment of freedom, this historic document continues to be the bedrock and blueprint of our policy orientation as the ANC led government. Principal in the contents of the Freedom Charter is the need to ensure that all South Africans live in dignity and enjoy equal rights and opportunities. It is contained in the preamble of this historic document and I quote, **“We the people of South Africa belong for all our country and the world to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white and no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people.”**

As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, I want all of us to continuously remember, in line with the ideals of the Freedom Charter that as government, we do not exist for the sake of it, but to fulfil the will of the people. We must at all times burn and engrave this into our conscience as public servants so that we always remember that we are not here to serve ourselves but the will of the people since this year has been declared by President Jacob Zuma as **“The year of the Freedom Charter.”**

Program Director

One of the most crucial characteristics of this session is that it is the penultimate session during our term which is coming to an end in 2016. During the inception of this term, our people derived mandate was and still is **“working together to build better communities.”** To this end, the ANC Manifesto for local government elections 2011 is clear on how we should go about doing so. It says and I quote, **“We need an economy that creates more jobs, decent work and sustainable livelihoods. We need better quality local public services with access for all. We need to create more united, non-racial, integrated and safer communities and to strengthen local government participation with effective, accountable and clean local government.”**

I am quite certain that this session has not been arranged for compliance purposes and as such, it should afford us ample time to honestly self-introspect. We need to frankly ask ourselves what has worked and what has not in the past years of our term in terms of attaining the noble objectives contained in our manifesto as I stipulated above. This session should provide us with a clear sense of strategic direction and also outline measurable goals in terms of implementing the above ideals taken from the people’s mandate. It must also serve as a useful tool to guide our day to day decision from now onwards and also help us evaluate progress and changing approaches when moving forward in the consolidation of our

people given mandate of **“working together to build better communities and move South Africa forward.”**

In doing so it is required of all us to be thorough and honest in outlining our strategic objectives and backing them up with realistic, researched and quantifiable benchmarks for evaluating results. Our preoccupation in this session should be how do we continue to address the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality in our society? Our reasons for existence as an institution can and is only justified through tangible deliverables in terms of how far we have gone in terms of extricating our people from the dehumanising and demeaning conditions of poverty, unemployment and the yawning gap of inequalities.

Ladies and gentlemen

I am quite certain that by now we realise that we have a mammoth task. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) policy document advises us that and I quote, **“No political democracy can survive and flourish if the masses of our people remain in poverty, without land, (and) without tangible prospects for a better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority of a democratic government.”** To this end, we can all agree that no matter how lofty our ideals could be, as long as they do not speak to the tangible prospect for a better life, we are reducing our democracy which was earned through sweat, tears and blood to a complete fuss and a mockery. As such, we must make it our mission to align our plans with those of central government and in this instance our strategic plans to achieve the set goals of our IDP should

also directly speak to deepening the ideals of the National Development Plan.

The NDP is unambiguous in its aims to ensure that all South Africans attain a decent standard of living through the elimination of poverty and reduction of inequality. The core elements of a decent standard of living identified in the NDP include among others sustainable delivery of water, sanitation, jobs, housing and electricity some of which are our competence as a district municipality. This is an indictment on our part considering that the 2014-2019 planning cycle should be viewed as the first in a series of five-year planning cycles that will advance the goals of the NDP. We must lay a foundation for the 2016-2021 planning cycle at local government level.

Honourable Speaker

It is now a matter of public knowledge that the Mopani District Municipality has had torrent times in the recent past.

We experienced as an institution a total collapse among others of our financial systems control which resulted in the institution plunging into a state of total financial chaos. Due to the crisis, we were unable to pay service providers and to run activities related to service delivery programs. But we are happy that during the past few weeks, we have experienced a steady turn around in terms of the status quo. In the spirit of intergovernmental relations, we are working together with other government

departments such as COGHSTA and Treasury to ensure that the situation returns back to normal.

Program Director

It is quite ironic that as an institution, we found ourselves plunging into a situation that was detected six years ago by the department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs through its report, the Status of Local Government in South Africa. The report then depicted challenges such as poor financial management and reporting which municipalities should be wary of. The report necessitated for a Municipal Turn Around Strategy and central among the objectives of the Local Government Turnaround Strategy is to build clean, effective, efficient, responsive and accountable local government. This is a route that as the Mopani District Municipality we are currently embarking on to ensure that history does not repeat itself. We must work together to jealously guard and put to good use the public resources which are meant to improve the quality of lives of our people to ensure that at the end of it all we can proudly declare that by “working together we have built better communities” in line with our electoral mandate which is our sole justification for existence.

Out of this strategic session, we must all of us emerge with a clarity of purpose to achieve these noble objectives.

Ladies and gentlemen

In all our dealings, we must always remember that ours is a participatory and a constitutional democracy. Section 152 sub-section (1)(a) of our Constitution demands that we should provide to our people **“a democratic and an accountable government for all communities.”**

Moreover, the Municipal Systems Act, charges us with an important responsibility of ensuring that **“the provision of services to our communities is done in a sustainable manner.”** Emanating from this, it is crystal clear that we have to be responsive, efficient and effective in our approach. We therefore cannot rest in finding more innovative ways of delivering better services to our people. This strategic session, should assist us in mapping a clear way forward in terms of how best should we sustain the turn around that is already underway in our institution. We must also find ways to stretch our abilities as local government to find new ways of reaching out to our communities to ensure that they form part of every program we undertake. The trust of our communities is non-negotiable in this participatory democracy, neither is transparent and accountable government.

Indeed, solutions for growth and development emerge from frank and open discussions on platforms such as this, where we can allow ourselves to reflect on the journey of development and even be critical about our performance, so that we do not become complacent but rather continue to improve our capabilities as we go on our journey of building better communities.

With these few words, I wish you all a fruitful and a successful session.

I thank you