

**WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE
MOPANI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY CLLR NKAKARENG RAKGOALE
DURING THE DISTRICT WATER SUMMIT HELD ON THE 3RD OF JUNE
2015.**

Mr Speaker

Chief Whip

MMC's

EXCO Members

Councillors

Traditional Leaders

Municipal Mangers

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning

We are gathered here this morning for the District Water Summit under the theme **“Water is life, sanitation is dignity.”** This theme gives complete resonance to the ANC led government’s vision of bringing **“a better life for all.”** It also epitomize the ultimate goal of the struggle for freedom and democracy which was to mainly restore the dignity to the marginalised majority. If this theme is anything to go by, there can never be a talk about a better life if there is no water and sanitation.

This theme therefore must serve as a reminder to all of us gathered here today the seriousness, the urgency and the importance with which we should treat the issues of provision of water and sanitation to our people. This summit takes place at the beginning of the final year of our electoral cycle. When the electorate put us into office in 2011, they did so by giving us an unambiguous mandate of **“working together to build better communities.”** We have since hit the ground running in our work of ensuring that our communities have much needed services and amenities because we fully understand that the sole justification of our existence as government is to serve the people.

Mr Speaker

It is an undisputed factor that there is a direct link between clean water provision and social development. Moreover water is a crucial commodity in the process of socio economic development. It therefore made a lot of sense that during the State of the Province Address Premier Chupu Mathabatha made the following commitment and I quote **“The provision of water is an integral part of our strategy to ensure economic development and poverty eradication.”** We are here today, to collectively compose better ways on how best to ensure that this commitment becomes a reality.

Ladies and gentlemen

Part of what we have done and are doing as government is to ensure that we invest heavily on water infrastructure to allow for a structured and systematic way of addressing water shortage challenges. To date, as the Mopani District Municipality we boast 21 water schemes, 62 pump stations,

19 water treatment works, over 1400km min pipelines, over 500 reservoirs and thousands of boreholes. However, despite our good intentions and hard work as government, many of our people still find themselves without clean drinking water.

We have in the current financial year witnessed a wave of unprecedented events in our district, that of service delivery protests. But of interest to us is that although communities were protesting for a variety of reasons, the common denominator in the list of their grievances was water. As the district municipality, we fully understand the frustrations of these communities in line with the theme of this summit **“water is life and sanitation is dignity.”** Hence we have swiftly intervened in those communities and other communities who had the same challenges but resorted to different ways of bringing the problem to our attention than staging protests. In the most recent case of Muhlava for instance, working together with community leaders, we have developed a practical program of action that is monitored by both our staff detachment and community leaders on a weekly basis. We want to thank the community leaders and community members at large for the support they are currently giving us in our endeavours to restore water in that area.

Program Director

Our intervention mechanisms are not only limited to the places where there are protests. The process of appointing contractors for various water projects is at an advanced stage.

These include but not limited to Kampersrus Bulk Water Supply, Hoedspruit Bulk Water Supply, Mametja Sekororo Water Treatment Plant, Upgrading of Phase Two of Tours Water Scheme, Thabina Water Works, and the Jopie-Mawa-Block 12- Ramotshinyadi Bulk Line. We can confirm that the appointed contractors will assume their duties on site within the next few days. Through these projects and others we hope to achieve our long standing objective of ensuring that we provide sustainable water supply throughout the entire district.

Having said all this, this summit must help us to find lasting solutions to water shortage challenges in our areas. We believe that the various stakeholders gathered here today will provide the necessary guidance on how to deal with some of the challenges we have pointed hitherto and also the social aspects such as illegal connections and vandalism of water service infrastructure. Another social aspect which poses a serious challenge is the growth of our settlement areas, sometimes unplanned.

This growth puts a stretch to our available water infrastructure. We must come out of this summit resolute on how to tackle this challenge consistent with the limited resources at our disposal.

Mr Speaker

The lack of adequate access to basic sanitation services continues to create massive environmental and health problems in both rural and urban areas in the district. The high backlog in the RDP level sanitation in villages constitutes a major risk in terms of ground water pollution.

This summit should also assist us to find ways of providing sustainable sanitation to restore the dignity of our people.

As we kick-start this summit, I want to burden all of you with the knowledge that we are now banking on your collective wisdom to find lasting solutions to these challenges. By so doing we are putting into practice our electoral mandate of working together to build better communities. We must emerge out of this summit with a clear and measurable program of action on how to tackle water and sanitation challenges and this program of action should be owned by all the stakeholders represented here today.

With these few words I would like to welcome you all and also wish you a successful summit characterised by robust engagements.

I thank you