

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY MEC FOR COGTA, HON. R.M MTSHWENI
DURING A GALA DINNER AT THE MBOMBELA STADIUM ON
THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2014**

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

HONOURABLE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF EHLANZENI DISTRICT
MUNICIPALITY, CLLR LETTAH SHONGWE

HONOURABLE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF MBOMBELA LOCAL
MUNICIPALITY, CLLR SIPHO MATHONSI

HONOURABLE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER OF
SALGA, CLLR MAFIKA NKOSI

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL IN THE PRESIDENCY, DR CASSIUS
LUBISI

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COGTA, MR
VUSI MADONSELA

THE AUDITOR-GENERAL, MR KIMI MAKWETU

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF SALGA, MR XOLILE GEORGE

PROVINCIAL CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS FROM THE VARIOUS
PROVINCES

THE MUNICIPAL MANAGER OF THE HOST DISTRICT
MUNICIPALITY, ADV. MBATHA

ESTEEMED MUNICIPAL MANAGERS AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

ALL PROTOCOLS OBSERVED

- 1 Programme Director, Municipalities are the vital cog of service delivery and as such they are the most important stakeholders for both the National and Provincial governments.
- 2 In our desire to support them we sometimes go to their offices at the same time (as National and Provincial government) and ask for reports and meetings. This can cause confusion and put a strain on them.
- 3 A sad story is often told about a Chief Financial Officer who at the same served as Acting Municipal Manager. In one fateful day, he held a meeting with officials from a National Department. Later on, he held a meeting with officials from a Provincial Department.
- 4 He then proceeded to his office to deal with reports related to his position as CFO and to his position as Acting MM. A third meeting, was waiting for him, which he attended. He collapsed right in the middle of the meeting and was rushed to a local hospital.
- 5 After gaining his consciousness, he immediately tendered his resignation on the spot, plunging the municipality into an administrative crisis, since there were no Section 56 Managers.
- 6 You may be wondering what is the moral of this sad story? We must not overwork our people. We must strengthen the capacity of our municipalities, by filling the critical vacancies for efficient functionality.
- 7 Programme Director, I have described municipalities as a vital cog of service delivery because our communities expect a lot from them. They see them as the closest government institution to report any form of grievances or complaints. Irrespective of whether the issue at hand has to do with National or provincial government.

- 8 We have declared this week a '**Public Service Week**'. Government has deployed civil servants to various service delivery points to make an assessment of the service we are providing to our people. Our municipalities will be under serious scrutiny. I listen with a great deal of interest to the comments, criticism and suggestions made by our people in the radio platforms.

- 9 While some appreciate the services provided by municipalities, however, they do not spare a thought that sometimes the criticism is misplaced. What I have realized is the fact that people do not draw the line between the responsibility of a municipality and the responsibility of National or Provincial government. All what they want is service delivery!

- 10 Our municipalities are exposed to all forms of protests. Some of them turn violent, and put the lives of our municipal leadership at risk. In one incident a Municipal Manager, was marched out of his office, and forced into a vehicle and driven away.

- 11 The perpetrators swore at him. And as a result, he never went back to his office. In some instances where cases are investigated, our municipal leadership live in fear due to death threats. Sometimes serious cases are dropped due to lack of evidence. Witnesses are threatened.

- 12 We have seen houses belonging to councillors being torched, leaving their families destitute. We sympathize with you whenever these protests rear an ugly head. We must work closely with law enforcement agencies to deal with individuals hell-bent on undermining our efforts to make Local Government a centre of service delivery excellence.

13 Programme Director, one of the challenges facing Local Government is the poor working relationship between the political leadership and the administration leadership. In instances where the relationship is good, those municipalities perform efficiently.

14 Programme Director, the local government elections for 2016 are around the corner. Already, there is a debate about whether Councillors should be appointed on a permanent basis. One of the arguments is that this option will reduce corrupt tendencies and promote clean governance improve clean working s 8th session of the governance. Already, Minister Pravin Godhan has weighed in the debate by setting the tone. He has already stated that our current economic growth will not be able to provide for this option. The economy is not growing in a pace that our fiscus can support this option. I hope you will be watching this debate with a keen interest, just as we are approaching the 2016 Local Government elections.

15 In Mpumalanga, we are working hard to improve the state of local government.

- ***Supported by the provincial Treasury, we have put together a remedial action plan to help municipalities improve their audit outcomes.***
- ***The necessity to strengthen the Municipal Public Account Committees is receiving the necessary attention.***
- ***We are strengthening the working relationship between the Political and Administration leadership.***
- ***We are strengthening the functionality of Ward Committees and Community Development Workers (CDWs) as a rapid response system to close the gap between our communities and government.***

- ***Councillors are expected to hold meetings in their wards at least two times a month to communicate service delivery matters and challenges thereof, and must keep a register of those meetings.***
- ***We are helping municipalities to develop revenue enhancement strategies.***
- ***With the support of the Municipal Infrastructure Agency of South Africa (MISA) we have deployed technical experts to municipalities for technical support.***
- ***We have negotiated with ESKOM to review payment agreements entered into with municipalities with a view to help municipalities to pay off the electricity debt.***

16 These support measures are key elements of building a capable and developmental state of local Government as envisaged in Chapter 13 of the NDP.

17 Programme Director, today is not a day for long speeches. After the long day discussions during the Forum, let me save the rest for the final day tomorrow.

18 As we are about to recognize excellence, I wish to congratulate the winners in advance. Tonight there will be no loser because those who will not be awarded, will take lessons so that in the next awards, it will then be their turn to receive the awards, for excellent performance.

19 We hope our visitors will use this opportunity as we mark September as Heritage month, to visit our magnificent tourist attractive sites and marvel at our nature before returning back.

I thank you.