

DRAFT SPEECH FOR THE MEC FOR CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, HONOURABLE MB MASUKU DURING THE GALA DINNER OF SALGA MPUMALANGA PEC LEKGOTLA ON 6 DECEMBER 2012: PROTEA HOTEL HAZYVIEW

**Programme Director,
Chairperson of SALGA Mpumalanga Cllr Mafika Nkosi
Members of the SALGA Provincial Executive Committee (PEC) Honourable Executive Mayors, Speakers and Chief Whips from all municipalities in the Province
Honourable Councillors and invited guests
The Provincial Executive Officer of SALGA, Ms Gugu Langa and your team
All Municipal Managers and Officials from the three spheres of Government
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Introduction

It is my pleasure to once again be afforded this opportunity to address this august gathering. The different deliberations and presentations that have taken place today have given us an indication of the where we are in terms of dealing with local government. These deliberations have been very long and they have covered a number of issues that have a direct bearing on our day to day work in improving the lives of our people. Whilst we may be awed at the challenges that still lie ahead of us, we must also take pride in the achievements that we have made. Having been in this portfolio for a few years now, I can confidently say that it is not all doom and gloom. We have made significant strides and we shall overcome the challenges.

We must remember that Local government is the spheres closest to the people and therefore the heat will always be felt most at this level. In the eyes of our communities this is the only government that they know. It is a fact that many of the issues raised by communities when they take to the streets are not local government issues, but this is of no comfort to our communities. Our communities know that if they encounter any problems their first point of call should be local government. It is at local government that the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and under development are truly felt. As organised local government working with both provincial and national government, SALGA has a very important role in making sure that we support and strengthen municipalities so that they are able to deal with the challenges ahead of them and meet the expectations of our communities. Local government will shape the perceptions that people have of government.

Programme Director a lot has been said during the deliberations that have taken place today. I do not want to take a lot of your time but there are a few issues that I must share with you;

Role and constitutional mandate of SALGA

Programme Director, as we all know that the existence of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) is in terms of the Organised Local Government Act of 1997. The Act enjoins SALGA to be recognised by both the national and provincial governments as a representative of different categories of municipalities. It is the role of SALGA to promote and protect the interest of local government, to transform local government in order to be able to fulfill its developmental role; as well as to affiliate with and participate in the affairs of any international organisation that will serve the interests of local government. It is therefore within this constitutional and legislative context that we as provincial government regard SALGA as a key partner for development, transformation and good governance.

Whilst our councils are functioning well, the strained relations of some of our troikas still remains an area of great concern. We are all aware there are number of municipalities where the functionality has been affected because of these tensions. In some offices the Troika is complementing each other; however there are some municipalities where the relations are non-complimentary. As SALGA these matters must bother us and we need to find a manner in which we will deal with these before our municipalities collapse.

Intergovernmental relations and co-operative governance

As we know that our decentralized system of government as established by the Constitution has three basic elements, making three spheres that are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated. In the context of how we as the provincial government relate to the local sphere, the distinctive element refers to the autonomy that both the province and local government enjoy. This autonomy dictates the degree at which each sphere is the final decision-maker on matters that fall within their areas of competence.

Secondly, local government and the province are interdependent in the sense that the province, just like national government, supervises the exercise of the autonomy exercised by a municipality. The province can make final binding decisions affecting local government. This supervision includes four types of activities, namely regulation; monitoring; support; and intervention.

The province and local government are interrelated in the sense that each must exercise its autonomy to the common good of the province by co-operating with one another. Legislative frameworks and policies are in place to concretize these distinctive, interdependent and interrelated elements within the context of intergovernmental relations and co-operative governance.

We remain concerned with the tensions that exist at the ward level between the Ward Councillors, Traditional Leaders, Traditional Councillors, Ward Committees and Community Development Workers (CDW). These tensions have rendered many of the wards dysfunctional and hamper service delivery. Due to these tensions government cannot be in charge and it opens a vacuum for opportunist to move into the space and mislead our communities. The question we must ask ourselves is how is it possible that with all these different stakeholders in the ward, we can still wake up in the morning and the community is on fire and we were not able to pick this up early and try to address their concerns. It is also worrying that with all these stakeholders we do not have important information on the elderly, disabled and vulnerable in the wards.

We have began a process of bringing all these stakeholders together to try address these tensions and also find a way of how they can all work together. We have already visited Gert Sibande and Ehlanzeni, and I must indicate that the issues that are emanating from these engagements are very interesting and we will be sharing these with SALGA and the municipalities to make sure that we implement them. We will be having similar engagements with Bushbuckridge and Thaba Chweu as part of our Ehlanzeni engagement and the last one will be in Nkangala. I am happy to indicate that in one of our engagements that we held in Mbombela last week was attended by the Chairperson of SALGA Cllr Mafika Nkosi.

Challenges currently facing our municipalities

The following challenges are currently confronting our municipalities, and our collective resolve in addressing them is urgently required:

- Institutional inefficiencies leading to non-compliance to legislation and lack of monitoring and evaluation systems
- Low revenue base for rural based municipalities and inability to collect debts
- Poor financial management and accountability due to lack of timeous reporting and detection of risks
- Poor relations between administrative and political arms of the municipalities due to quality of delegation system and mechanisms

- Lack of skilled personnel in finance, technical and town planning departments
- Low levels of good governance due to poor political oversight and executive accountability
- Increasing social distance between ward councillors and communities

Spatial Planning

The issues of spatial planning are still a matter of great concern in the province. Whilst some efforts have been made to address these, we still have areas where there is poor spatial planning. There are still cases of development happening in an uncoordinated manner in municipalities and in areas under Traditional Leaders. As municipalities we must begin to reclaim our places as centers of development. Municipalities must make it clear to both Provincial and National Government that they will not determine the direction of development in municipal areas, however they will follow development as per the municipal spatial plans. This therefore means it is important that we make sure that all municipalities develop spatial plans.

These spatial plans must be developed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders and sector departments. In the consultation phase all stakeholders must be allowed to make their inputs which will make sure that they also provide the relevant expertise that they have in their respective fields.

The Department has held workshops in the Nkangala, Gert Sibande and Ehlanzeni Districts on the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Bill (SPLUMB), the draft Mpumalanga Planning and Development Bill and the coordination of land use management in communal lands between Traditional Councils and Municipalities.

Service Delivery Agreements to address challenges in local government

Programme Director, in the quest of giving practical emphasis to the need for effective development, transformation and good governance the National Cabinet Lekgotla held in January 2010, adopted 12 Outcomes that reflect the mandate of this current administration.

These outcomes are:

- Improved quality of basic education
- A long and healthy life for all South Africans
- All people in South Africa are and feel safe
- Decent employment through inclusive economic growth
- A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path

- An efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure
- Vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities with food security for all
- Sustainable human settlements and improved quality of household life
- A responsive, accountable, effective and efficient local government system
- Environmental assets and natural resources that are well protected and continually enhanced
- Create a better South Africa and contribute to a better and safer Africa and World
- An efficient, effective and development oriented public service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenship

The President and the National Cabinet expect us to achieve the provisions of Outcome 9 by working together as provincial government and municipalities in collaboration with other partners and stakeholders to provide a “responsive, accountable, effective and efficient local government system”.

I have signed a performance agreement with the Premier on Outcome 9, and all Executive Mayors have done the same with me. In order to achieve this Outcome, there are seven outputs that should always be our guiding beacon, namely:

- Implementing a differentiated approach to municipal financing, planning and support;
- Improving access to basic services;
- Implementing a community work programme;
- Supporting human settlement outcomes;
- Deepening democracy through a refined ward committee model;
- Strengthening administrative and financial capability; and
- A single window of coordination.

Collective programmes of engagement between SALGA and provincial government to achieve Outcome 9

Programme Director, I hope that this PEC meeting will mark a turning point to begin a joint programme wherein both the provincial government and municipalities, through SALGA will work together to realize the key objectives of Outcome 9 and in that regard our focus should be on the following:

- We need to mobilize sector departments and other partners like the private sector to support all the programmes initiated by our municipalities to meet service delivery targets within the context of their IDP’s
- We need to engage sector departments and other partners in support of municipalities to realize the imperatives of their credible LED strategies for economic development and employment opportunities

- We need to ensure that offices of Speakers are capacitated to manage ward committee programmes and public participation activities in general
- We need to conduct continuous joint capacity building programmes for officials and councillors and also advocate a programme for the retention of skilled and experienced councillors and senior officials within the sector
- We need to work together to strengthen and align the work initiated by our local, district and provincial IGR structures in our province
- We need to monitor and support programmes and plans of all our municipalities in uprooting fraud and corruption and ensure that there is compliance to the Councillors Code of Conduct
- We need to promote positive profiling of municipalities by conducting public awareness programmes on the powers and functions of municipalities
- We must communicate with public at the local level
- We need to build effective intergovernmental systems that would eliminate governance fragmentation, enable coordinated government delivery efforts and encourage integrated development planning in order to achieve maximum impact.
- We need to implement and expand on Operation Clean Audit 2014 by developing debt collection and revenue enhancement strategies, implement and support municipal budgets and reporting requirements, review current supply chain management regulations and develop municipal priority skills strategies. We need to ensure that we strengthen municipal financial management systems such that by 2014 the dream of Clean Audits is realized.
- We need to continue creating enabling environment for local government to improve service delivery functioning in a highly professional manner. It is from that perspective that we need to comply with the Municipal Systems Amendment Act that was passed by parliament and subsequently signed by the President in July 2011.
- We need to ensure that critical posts in particular Sections 56 and 57 are filled as a matter of urgency, these include municipal managers, chief financial officers, town engineers, human resource executives and communication executives.
- We need to mobilise and empower our communities through building of effective ward committee systems such that they can meaningfully participate and contribute to matters related to our municipalities, accountability and their development.
- We need to take an active part in addressing skills shortages and eliminate vacancies within our municipalities.
- We need to work together to address huge infrastructure backlogs currently negatively affecting service delivery in our municipalities.

- We need to foster partnerships with various stakeholders including labour to ensure that our municipalities are better enabled to deliver.
- We need to ensure that people, particularly women and the youth, become catalysts of our democracy, by informing, educating and mobilizing them to take a meaningful part in the affairs of local government.

Conclusion

Programme Director, we all have noted with appreciation that the national Minister has heeded the call of our councillors for a special risk insurance cover related to damages and destruction caused to councillor properties during violent protests. The introduction of a special SASRIA cover as part of the 2012 Upper limits of salaries, allowances and benefits is much welcomed and should be embraced by all municipal councils. SALGA must make sure that our Councils are functional and meet as required in the context of the local government legislative calendar, and that all Council committees exercise their political over-sight properly over municipal administrations. Issues of compliance to legislative requirements must not be compromised.

Let me take this opportunity to once again thank the Provincial Leadership of SALGA for allowing me an opportunity to engage with you and share my views on certain matters. Let us continue to work with determination to address the challenges faced by our municipalities.

I thank you.