

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY MEC FOR COGTA IN MPUMALANGA,
HON. R.M MTSHWENI ON THE OCCASION OF THE SALGA
PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE, GRACELAND CASINO,**

DATE: 6 NOVEMBER 2016

Programme Director;
The Chairperson of SALGA Mpumalanga, Councillor M Nkosi,
The Chairperson of the Mpumalanga House of Traditional Leaders,
Kgoshi Mokoena,
The Honourable Mayor of Govan Mbeki Local Municipality, Councillor
F Maboja-Boltman,
Members of the Provincial Executive Committee of SALGA,
Honourable Executive Mayors,
Honourable Speakers,
Honourable Councillors,
Representatives from our Social Partners and NGOs
Officials from the different spheres of Government
Ladies and Gentlemen
Lotjani

1. I am truly honoured to address this august function barely two months after the fourth Local Government elections in the country. On the 3rd of August 2016 our communities went to the polls to cast their votes, and ushered in the fourth leadership of Local Government which members of the Provincial SALGA are a part.
2. It was a humbling experience for the majority of our communities in Mpumalanga to retain the ruling party, the ANC, in power in all the 20 municipalities. By voting for the ANC, they expressed full confidence of the ANC's commitment, as a vehicle towards '**a better life for all**' destination. Therefore, we owe it to ourselves, to ensure that the aspiration of a better life for all, that we committed ourselves to, ahead of the elections, is achieved.

3. The Provincial SALGA, under the able leadership of the Chairperson, Cllr Mafika Nkosi and members of the Provincial Executive, have set the ball rolling through the implementation of the Integrated Councillor Induction Programme (ICIP), in the three districts. We commend you for the sterling leadership you have demonstrated with this capacity building programme.
4. Through this programme, all councillors were prepared to pursue further, the better life for all commitment without fail. (We have been trained in the ANC not to sleep during the revolution!!!!).
5. As we embark on this fourth term of Local Government, it is important that we take stock of our achievements over the past five years. We should do so critically, taking into cognisance the fact that although we have done a lot, however, we still have a lot to do.
6. The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs will convene a Local Government Summit before the end of this month, to assess the performance of our municipalities and to map the way forward as we mark the beginning of the fourth term of a democratic Local Government.
7. The summit will serve as a perfect platform to determine whether the performance of municipalities translate into the service delivery that our communities are expecting. Mpumalanga experienced a fair share of service delivery protests during the run up to the elections. These protests got me worried, as they were directed in the main, to our municipalities.
8. As I have indicated earlier, Programme Director, a lot has been achieved during the last five years. Statistics released by STATS SA, have provided evidence that municipalities in Mpumalanga are leading the way in the delivery of water and sanitation, compared to the 8 other provinces.

9. Considering that our province is rurally-based and that most of our municipalities are grant-dependent, you must pat yourselves at the back for a job well done. This achievement, despite the limited resources at our disposal, is a smack in the face of doomsayers who try very hard to convince our communities that service delivery remains a pie in the sky.
10. Programme Director, the triple challenges of poverty remain a key challenge facing our country. Expectations from our communities are high and as such, all sectors of government are expected to double their efforts in contributing to the fight against the scourge. SALGA, as the voice of municipalities, must contribute to the mobilization of resources to address the plight.
11. Implementation of quick wins to cushion our people against the rippling effects of poverty is key. Regravelling of roads where access is a challenge, de-bushing and rehabilitation of graves, cleaning of municipal roads and building of storm water drainages as part of Extended Public Works Programmes (EPWP) are some of these quick wins we must pursue in order to create an income against the plight of our people.
12. Programme Director, the implementation of the Integrated Municipal Support Plan (IMSP) as a pillar for the Back to Basics, is at an advanced stage. This plan was approved by the Provincial Executive Council in Mpumalanga as an over-arching tool that seeks to improve Municipal performance and delivery of basic services.
13. The plan focuses in the following areas of Municipal performance, namely: **Putting people first, Delivery of Basic Services, Good Governance, Financial Management** and lastly **Building Institutional and Administrative capability**.

14. The success of this plan hinges on the participative role that SALGA, as the voice of municipalities plays, to ensure that the objectives of the IMSP are realized. The plan is implemented in pursuit of a responsive, effective, efficient and sustainable co-operative governance system expressed in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030.
15. The improvement of municipalities in the delivery of basic services, the convening of meetings by Councillors in their constituencies to close the social distance, the improvement of municipal audit outcomes, the filling of critical vacancies with the required skills, will be the defining moment of the fifth Local Government Administration. In addition, it will be the arbiter of whether our election manifesto will be realized or not.
16. The establishment of **Operation Vuka Sisebente (OVS)**, as a service delivery model in our province, will serve as a panacea in our effort to put people first. Notwithstanding the challenges that characterize the establishment of the OVS, we will double our efforts in ensuring that all wards have war rooms for our people to use as a platform to raise service delivery challenges, without resorting to violence. We call upon SALGA to support this initiative.
17. Programme Director, we congratulate the successful sitting of all Municipal Councils, immediately after the elections, and the successful elections of Speakers, Executive Mayors and Chief Whips. The success of these processes give us hope that municipal councils will conduct their business as stipulated in the Municipal Systems' Act and deliver on their mandate.

18. We also congratulate the successful amalgamation of the Mbombela and Umjindi Local Municipalities into the City of Mbombela. The successful establishment of the City of Mbombela will set a precedence for the amalgamation of municipalities proposed by the Minister of COGTA, with a view to improve the financial viability of municipalities, in the next term of the elections.
19. Programme Director, tonight is a night for awards to be conferred to the best performing municipalities. We wait in great anticipation, for the winners in the different categories, as they will be presented tonight. I will be observing with keen interest whether the awards contribute towards the improvement of service delivery for our communities, as part of my oversight role. Congratulations in advance to the winners!
20. As we prepare for the celebration, let me indicate that the Department of COGTA in Mpumalanga has won an award as a leading department in the country in terms of support for municipalities. The award was conferred to the department by the Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit and Risk Officers (CIGFARO) during a conference in Durban on Monday.
21. We congratulate **Ehlanzeni District Municipality**, for winning an award for its **Clean Audit** achievement during the same conference. Four of our local municipalities were conferred with awards for the improvement in their 14/15 audit outcomes. The municipalities are: **Nkomazi, Bushbuckridge, Mbombela and Umjindi**. We congratulate them for this achievement.
22. Programme Director, I hope I have not stolen the thunder away from the municipalities to be conferred with awards tonight!

23. In conclusion, I wish to congratulate in advance the candidates to serve in the Provincial Executive Committee after the elections tomorrow. On behalf of the Premier, Hon. DD Mabuza and the Provincial Executive Council, we commit ourselves to join you in the trenches for the revolution of making a better life for all, a reality.

Ngiyabonga.