

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY MEC MASUKU AT SALGA MPUMALANGA
COUNCILLORS INDUCTION PROGRAMME LAUNCH ON THE 30TH JUNE 2011
IN GREENWAY WOODS – WHITE RIVER**

Programme Director, SALGA Leadership, Executive Mayors, Speakers Chief Whips and Councillors of Municipalities, Traditional Leaders present, Leaders of Political Parties, Representatives from IEC, DBSA, GTZ, LGSETA and all Government stakeholders.

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to have been afforded this memorable opportunity to address this august gathering, the launch of the Councillors Induction Programme. As you are aware, this is my maiden speech since allocated the portfolio of Co-Operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. This address will seek to strengthen the relationship between ourselves and SALGA since its formation in 2006.

SALGA as an autonomous Association of Municipalities serve as an intellectual capital as acquired over the years and your values to be responsive, innovative, dynamic and Excellency underpins all the work you do. You continuously play your role as a nerve centre of advice and support, representation employer body and building the profile and image of Local Government.

This launch comes against the backdrop of monumental milestone in the history of our country. It comes against the backdrop of South Africa having recently celebrated the 10th Anniversary of democratic Local Government.

Another Chapter was added in a South African history, adding another value in the unfolding of our young democracy. Our people from all walks of life, across race, class, gender, young and old from urban to rural came out in their numbers defying adverse cold weather conditions to make a bold statement entrenched in the Freedom Charter that "*People Shall Govern*".

Undoubtedly, our people want their voice heard that they are growing alive to the fact that the time of taking matters that affects their daily lives for granted are over. Whether it is service delivery, lazy and corrupt officials or Councillors or the fight against crime they want to make their voice to be heard.

Indeed, the most recent elections, the voice of our people were indeed loud and clear making it known democratically whom they have confidence in to take them to a better life.

I take this opportunity to congratulate all 973 Councillors who were elected in our 21 municipalities. We all remain confident that you will do your utmost best to improve the lives of the people in all our communities. This will be achieved if you put the interests of those that you serve before your own.

The launching today of the Councillors Induction Programme is to practicalize the voices of our diverse communities ensuring that our newly elected Councillors live up to the expectations, hopes, aspirations and ambitions of our people.

As COGTA, working closely with SALGA and other key stakeholders in the Local Government sector we will spend much money and energy in ensuring that we build a new cadre of a Councillor. A cadre of a Councillor who is devoted and committed to work smarter, harder and faster to deliver services to the citizens. A cadre who understand that election to leadership position is not a trumpet for self-importance and self-gratification but an opportunity to serve.

Above all, a cadre who will on daily basis make an assessment or introspection in terms of his/her contribution in ensuring that all of us live up to the objectives of the delivery agreement on outcome 9: That of achieving a responsive, accountable, effective and efficient Local Government systems.

All of us have confidence that the new cadre of Councillors are in a better position than their predecessors to take us to higher heights of achievements. This is because they had the opportunity to observe, learn and gain the necessary experience during the past 10 years of democratic local governance.

They are coming at a time where monitoring and evaluation of performance in Government has been strengthened and tightened. They are coming at a time informed by the report of the state of Local Government in South Africa published in 2009 where a comprehensive diagnosis of the challenges faced by Local Government was conducted which led to the Local Government turnaround strategy (LGTAS) which seeks to address those challenges systematically and consistently.

The overarching objective of the LGTAS is to restore the confidence of the majority of our people in our Municipalities as the primary expression of the development state. The objectives of LGTAS can be summarised as follows:

- Ensure that Municipalities meet the basic service need of communities.
- Build clean, effective, efficient, responsive and accountable local government.
- Improve performance and professionalism in municipalities.
- Improve national policy, oversight and support
- Strengthen partnerships between local government, communities and civil society.

All of us gathered here have a crucial role to play and we are required to lead from the front on the operation clean audit 2014 campaign. This campaign will be strengthened and intensified to promote unqualified audits from every municipality. It is with great sense of pride and joy that as I'm standing before you as a Province, we are a shining example of what can be achieved when we work together towards a clean administration.

Again, allow me to join the Premier, the Auditor-General and the country at large in congratulating Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Steve Tshwete Local Municipality and Victor Khanye Local Municipality for obtaining a clean, clean, clean audit as the Premier put it.

This demonstrate what can be achieved when an active leadership is provided by Mayors and Councillors in their oversight to improve governance and financial management systems.

We will also continue to collaborate with Treasury, DBSA and other stakeholders in providing support and monitoring of Municipalities to improve their audit outcomes.

Among the other critical areas that Councillors will need to pay special attention to are:

- Improvement of our spatial planning which continue to perpetuate segregated settlement patterns.
- Viability of Municipalities
- Stability of the Executives, Councils and the administration.
- It is not understandable that after 11 years of Local Governance, we are still grappling with issues of relations. We need innovation and creativity to deal with these matters.

As the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs we held a three day Indaba last week that was attended by most of you present here. At the Indaba we intended to provide all Councillors with the current state of local government in our province.

It was evident at the Indaba that we continue to make progress in ensuring a better life for all our people. In the same breath it was evident that we still have challenges in our municipalities.

These challenges relate to among others; municipalities' unsatisfactory spending on the Municipal Infrastructure Grant, poor financial management by some municipalities resulting in unacceptable audit opinions from the Auditor General and asset management. Some municipalities are not doing well in collecting revenue that is due to them. Public participation and functional ward committees remained a challenge in some municipalities.

Some of the resolutions taken at the Indaba are:

- To fill all critical funded vacant positions with suitable and appropriate qualified individuals within three months. This will ensure that there is strategic leadership in our municipalities;
- That all departments, state owned enterprises and government employees to pay all their outstanding municipal accounts immediately and that the each municipality will craft and implement a programme of debt management and revenue enhancement. Municipalities have to ensure that issues of billing systems are addressed to provide credible accounts to all consumers of services;
- To strengthen the Project Management Units in all municipalities and provide technical support through the District Rapid Response Units and Provincial Rapid Response Support Unit to facilitate, co-ordinate, monitor, evaluate and streamline all support initiatives aimed at local government.
- To provide adequate support in finalisation of Integrated Infrastructure Plans aligned to Provincial Infrastructure Master Plans, Asset register and Asset management plan;
- That in 2011 all municipalities Integrated Development Plans must be credible, improved involvement of sector departments and deployment of officials at the appropriate levels and ensure targeted support;
- To immediately re-launch all ward committees and other local fora, ably supported by capacitated and resourced CDW's, Traditional Councils and Ward Committees to ensure that public participation is realised in all municipalities and

- Reaffirmed zero tolerance to any form of corruption and those involved irrespective of their positions and status, will be brought to book through a due process.

At the Indaba we also signed a delivery agreement on Outcome 9 with all Executive Mayors a symbol of committing ourselves to the seven outputs contained in this outcome.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Salga for this training programme aimed at inducting our newly-elected Councillors. This training programme is a clear commitment by Salga to ensuring that our municipalities are geared up and capacitated to addressing challenges faced by our communities.

We are confident that this training will equip you with all the necessary skills and knowledge to address the challenges and work with us to implement the Indaba resolutions.

All of us gathered here today have a responsibility to ensure that violent service delivery protests are a thing of the past in our communities.

We all acknowledge that Local Government is the coal face of service delivery. When our people wake up in the morning, thinking of washing, the breakfast they must have, the safeness and reliability of the street they must walk through, the transport they would use to reach their destination to work, the decent work where they are going to perform, the lights which they must switch off when they go to sleep after having a decent supper are all reliant on the performance of the Local sphere of Government.

We have entrusted our Councillors with confidence and trust to succeed in their endeavours in meeting the expectations of the people.

The Induction Programme is not a Grade R type of teaching but complement and strengthens the knowledge experience you already have to make your intervention in the life of our people to be more relevant, focused and urgent.

Shall I take this opportunity to wish you all the best and assure you that you will be provided with the on-going efficient support as you execute your onerous noble duties as servants of our people.

“Let us all make local government everybody’s business”

I thank you.