

**ADRESS BY THE HON. M.B MASUKU (MPL) MEC FOR CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS DURING THE INAUGURATION OF THE THABA CHWEU EXECUTIVE MAYOR, CLLR M.M MAROBELA IN LYDENBURG, 21 JANUARY 2011**

Programme Director

Speaker of the Thaba Chweu Municipality

The Executive Mayor of Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Cllr Khosi Mkhonto

The Executive Mayor of Thaba Chweu Municipality, Cllr M Marobela

Fellow Councillors

Members of the Alliance partners

Fellow Comrades

Ladies and Gentlemen

Honourable Speaker, today marks the dawn of a new chapter in the history of the local government sector. This function to inaugurate the new Executive Mayor, Cllr Marobela gives Thaba Chweu Municipality an opportunity to reclaim its position as one of the best municipalities in the country. As I was travelling to this area, I was touched by the sense of peace and tranquility glorified by the beauty of nature in this place. Lydenburg, Sabie and Graskop have earned themselves a reputation of being preferred tourist destination not only in Mpumalanga, but in South Africa as a whole. However, the ugly scenes of burning tyres barricading the roads, created a picture of a city at war, during the service delivery protests, which resulted in the decision to invoke Section 139 of the Constitution, to place the municipality under Administration, as an intervention measure and a last resort by the Provincial Cabinet.

Honourable Speaker, following months of intense and endless efforts to turn the municipality around, I can confidently say that the Thaba Chweu Municipality is now ready to execute its mandate of improving the lives of our people in the collective and capable leadership of the Executive Mayor, Cllr Marobela. I would like to commend the Administrator, Mr Terrence Mokale and his team for a job well done, by putting in place systems that will help the municipality to function properly. Despite numerous challenges, Mr Mokale and his team were able to put in place the following systems for proper governance in the municipality:

- Public Participation;
- Integrated Development Plan (IDP);
- Performance Management System;
- Administration and Human Resources;
- Municipal Services and
- Credit Control.

Through these systems, I am confident Honourable Speaker that a space has been created for the community to participate in the activities of Thaba Chweu through the Wards and that consultations will be effective. I am confident that council will also find space to function properly. I am confident that the budget, limited as it is, will be managed properly and that management and staff will work according to the rules and regulations that govern municipalities.

Honourable Speaker, South Africa is a developmental state. And as such, the third sphere of government, i.e municipalities, serve as one of the pillars of this path. However, this path is bound to fail if we as communities which are served by the municipalities do not play our part. Most of our municipalities are struggling to collect revenue, which makes it difficult for them to sustain. I call upon our people to contribute to the sustainability of the municipalities, including here in Thaba Chweu, by paying for services rendered.

One of the challenges you will be faced with Honourable Executive Mayor and fellow councilors as you assume office, is to revive the culture of payment of services. This can only be done if we mobilize our communities to do so. One of the successes of the Administration, during the implementation of the turn around strategy, was to establish a data base for indigents. We now know who can afford to pay and who cannot. We appeal to our communities to pay for the services in the spirit of 'making Local Government Everybody's Business'.

Honourable Speaker, as the Executive Mayor takes up the hot seat, it is important to note the challenges that are still faced by our people here, in the area of service delivery. Although a remarkable amount of work has been done to ensure that schools and clinics are provided with clean water in the municipality, however, the backlog for the supply of water is still there. It is also worth noting that there is still a backlog in the area of electricity supply and sanitation. Bearing in mind the source of the service delivery protests in this area which took place last year, I am confident that the Executive Mayor will deal vigorously with these challenges.

Imbued with the spirit of service delivery and the love for his people, I have no doubt in my mind that the Executive Mayor will tackle these challenges head on. As a department we know that the battle to fight poor service delivery is a collective responsibility, we are poised to walk side-by-side with you to ensure that we win this war together.

Honourable Speaker, the President Zuma-led government has adopted a zero-tolerance towards corruption. It has also committed itself to perform better than before. The level of commitment was demonstrated when all government institutions signed a performance agreement to live up to this challenge. Premier D.D Mabuza has also committed us to put more action and less 'scamtho'. The Thaba Chweu Municipality is also party to the agreement.

This year, our people will return to the polls to choose local government representatives of their choice. Local government is where most of our people have direct and frequent contact with government. The commitment of our government must find expression in the services rendered by local government. We need to ensure that the challenges of service delivery are addressed in a systematic, more determined and transparent manner; at all times working to involve communities in resolving problems and overcoming whatever obstacles that may exist. We have the power and the means to make local government work better.

We have something to build on. There are many aspects of local government that work very well in our country and in our province in particular. In addition, the majority of our councillors serve our people with honesty and integrity.

As you take up your position, I wish you, the Speaker, the Council and the people of Thaba Chweu Municipality success.

I thank you.