

# **KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR AT THE LAUNCH OF THE IKAGENG COURT**

**Ikageng**

**October 10, 2008**

Programme Director

Honoured and Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocol Observed

It is an honour and a great privilege for me to be offered an opportunity to address you at this important occasion.

We are gathered here today to lay yet another brick or throw another blow in the on – going to build our criminal justice system and fight the scourge of crime in our community specifically.

One of the most common priorities of all the three spheres of Government is to ensure that integrated social crime prevention initiatives are undertaken across all the levels. This involves taking into consideration external factors that impact on peace and stability in local communities such as unemployment, illiteracy, housing infrastructure, health issues and the shortage of recreational facilities. This government has consistently committed itself to ensuring that South Africans are free from want and fear.

We need to develop and implement comprehensive and integrated plans to deal with, not only the containment of crime as a short-term strategy, but a plan which will enable us to prevent crime on a long-term basis with more emphasis on social crime prevention. We have started to implement programmes aimed at changing and improving the lives of our people.

It is a known fact that the South African Criminal Justice System rests primarily on three pillars: the police, who are responsible for preventing and investigating crime, and apprehending suspected criminals. The prosecuting authority and the courts, which prosecute, convict and punish the accused that are found guilty of the crimes. Correctional Services, which carries out sentences imposed by the courts and seeks to rehabilitate the convicted criminals in its care.

The fact that you have national departments functioning across the three spheres of government requires a close co-ordination of the activities of the Criminal Justice Cluster within the province. Therefore a need for a co-ordination strategy for the cluster exists.

Some of the strategic priorities that are critical for coordination are the following:

- Enhance interagency communication and information sharing
- Enhance the operation of policing forums
- Improve the SAPS and Justice interface
- Build public confidence in, and access to, the CJS and
- Improve efficiency and speed of the criminal justice process, especially court administration.

The city of Potchefstroom, especially the communities of Ikageng and the surrounding areas is indeed privileged to have yet another court of justice. These communities will now enjoy equal access to justice as their counterparts in the city and suburbs, and thereby will have their dignity and self worth restored.

The launch of this court certainly does demonstrate and assures our people that our Government remains committed to the ideals contained in our Constitution. The launch also creates an enabling environment for the promotion of constitutionalism and the rule of law.

Some of the pillars of our constitutionalism is the rights culture that we have continued to nurture since day one of our democracy; i.e: an effective and efficient administration of justice, including access to courts, sound management of these courts, provision of quality legal services and the promotion of human rights education and awareness.

The Constitution is an important contract amongst ourselves as South Africans. It entrenches ideals to which we all agree. It is a product of consensus reached about the principles that unite us in our diversity. But for many in our country the principles entrenched in our Constitution can be traced back as ideals dearly held by the forebearers of our struggle for democracy and equality.

It is said for instance, that the ANC's founder, Pixley Ka Isaka Seme attempted to formulate a Bill of Rights as early as 1923. The Africans' Claims in South Africa was a document adopted by the Annual Conference of the ANC on the 16th December 1943.

The ground breaking policy of the ANC, the Freedom Charter also contributed a great deal in the development and nourishment of the rights culture, particularly relevant in this regard is its assertion that "All shall be equal before the law." 'all' cannot be equal before the law unless and until they have equal access to the courts. That is why, Programme Director, I have already asserted in this speech that the launch of this court today is yet another milestone in our striving to ensure the equality of all before the law.

In the final analysis, Programme Director, the negative effects of crime compounded by unequal access to justice impacts on perceptions about our country as a whole. Further, it impacts on the lives of the country's citizens, to the extent that we can no longer tolerate criminality.

On behalf of the City Council and its residents I also wish to extend our appreciation heartfelt thanks to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, the United States for International Development (USAID), as well as Business Against Crime South Africa (BACSA) for helping to bring justice closer to through the building of this court.

I thank you all.