

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE ACTING
EXECUTIVE MAYOR, Cncllr. E. MODIAKGOTLA,
AT THE OCCASION OF THE TLOKWE CITY
COUNCIL WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL DAY
CELEBRATIONS**

June 05, 2008

Programme Director,
Esteemed and Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good morning everybody.

We all hear on a daily basis about the climate related challenges and opportunities with which we are faced as a world region, and as a planet. Our country, together with the rest of the world, is at major cross-roads. The direction we choose will affect fundamentally our destination, and the heritage we will leave behind for our generations.

I suspect that we all have our own vision of that destination for our country and particularly for this beautiful city of us - mine is one of a vibrant, healthy city supported by a dynamic economy and stable, productive and effectively guarded environmental systems.

The need to mitigate and adapt to climate change is urgent and imperative if this vision is to become a reality.

In the past the old developmental paradigm used to emphasize economic progress on the back of industrial and technological advancement at all costs, often without considering the adverse impact on nature and environment.

The development without care for environment has posed threats to the very existence of life itself.

Now the realization that mere progress and economic development cannot solve all our problems has increased. Development and environment should go hand in hand. Sustainable development is the new paradigm.

I want to make a plea today to all that are gathered here that we need to begin a movement of environmental activists. We should be actively involved in activities that raise environmental awareness and enhance its preservation. These activities will help all of us to develop a sense of environmental responsibility, which is so essential in our every day life. It is the absence of this responsibility that otherwise causes problems on our streets, residential areas, market places and other public places. This leaves you all - responsible citizens, with a great burden to shoulder. But I am confident that you have the capacity not merely of shouldering this burden but also influencing your families, friends, neighbours, business partners, co-workers or any people that you frequently interact with to follow and observe sound environmental discipline.

On its part, the City Council, through the Office of the Executive Mayor is today launching its flagship Adopt – A – Park project. The very purpose of the project is to begin the environmental activism that I am talking about. I make an impassioned plea that we all should grasp this opportunity and make a contribution to our efforts of preserving our environment by identifying open spaces and street – sides whereby we can plant trees, laws and generally greenify our city.

The national theme for the observation of this year's Environmental Day is "Co2, kick the habit – towards a low carbon economy". It is therefore not coincidental that we are also launching our 'Adopt – A – Park' project today.

Our plan is that the 'Environment Day' should be celebrated everyday in our city through this greenifying project.

The problem we are confronting on a global scale is that we are all personally responsible for releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels for transportation (driving and flying) and home energy (electricity, heating, and cooling). This leads to global warming, which is destroying the earth's biodiversity and native ecosystems.

The benefits of planting native trees are numerous:

- they help stop global warming by reducing greenhouse gases
- they reduce soil erosion and water pollution
- they improve human health by producing oxygen and improving air quality
- they reduce home energy needs by providing shade in summer and a windbreak in winter
- they provide habitat for native wildlife (including songbirds)

I can further go on and again indicate the following scientifically proven facts about the benefits provided by planting one tree:

- it absorbs over a ton of harmful greenhouse gases over its lifetime
- it produces enough oxygen for four people every day
- it provides the equivalent cooling effect of ten room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day

Before I conclude, I therefore would like to repeat my appeal for everyone to make a personal commitment to follow the path of sustainable development earnest. Wherever we are and whatever we do, let us all be environmentally friendly, -wise and active.

I thank you all.