

SPEECH AT THE MAYORAL SPORTS AWARDS AT THE MADIBA BANQUETE HALL IN MAY 21, 2008

Programme Director

All Protocol Observed

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a singular honour for me to be with you this evening, to share with you in paying tribute to our city's sporting achievement. This function symbolises not only our city's pre-occupation but also how our nation holds sporting excellence in high esteem.

As I speak tonight, Tlokwe municipality will start hosting Vodacom league knock – out competition soccer games beginning tomorrow until Sunday, when two new entrants to the Mvela league, the second biggest league division after the Premier Soccer League will be announced. Next week we will also be hosting a string of meetings in preparation for the SRSA Zone VI games that will be played in Potchefstroom. This is a premier international athletic event involving all the SADC countries as well those in its close vicinity.

Programme Director, I mentioned these events to indicate and re-emphasise that this city of ours still remains the major sporting mecca in the North West Province. These events can only help to position our city as one of the 'must' destinations in 2010 and beyond.

And tonight we are gathered here to acknowledge and honour our sporting ambassadors who also have a major role to play in this regard. These heroes and heroines we are gathered around here are not only our ambassadors but are also role models for our youth who must follow their footsteps to preserve this rich legacy.

Our gathering here also serves to inspire our sports people, the pride of our city, to aspire to become reach the highest that can be achieved, that is why the theme for tonight is "towards Beijing"; where the ultimate sporting giants will gather and compete this year.

It also expresses the Government's total commitment to the promotion and development of sport and recreation amongst all our people. That commitment draws its strength from our knowledge that sport and recreation are indispensable ingredients in our drive to build a new nation. They are an essential part of our efforts to raise the quality of life of all South Africans, especially those emerging from deprivation.

We are very proud of the sports men and women that we are honoring tonight. They are our treasured possessions, jewels in our city's crown. Tonight they will know that their triumphs are celebrated by the entire city whose banner they have raised high amongst the fellow country men and nations of the world.

But they should have no doubt in their minds about the huge social responsibility that comes with the status that the we confer on them as a result of their achievements.

Our country's sport in general still has a long and winding road to travel before we reach the pinnacle of our dreams. Our sports people have the standing and the influence to play a leadership role in achieving our ideal of making sport accessible to all our people, and to further raise sporting standards. They should not just be beneficiaries of the process. We expect to see them as active catalysts for change, not only in Olympism but in every area of sport.

The private sector's increasing involvement in sport is most encouraging. We should not let this opportunity pass without acknowledging the willingness of the sector to assist in making a fitting tribute to our sporting endeavors.

I would also like to urge others within the private sector who have not yet done so, to do what they can to increase the resources we put into sport.

This spirit of partnership will stand us in good stead as we take on the challenge of persuading the FIFA 2010 World Cup LOC that this city is a right place to host one of the participating countries as a training venue.

On a bigger picture, ladies and gentlemen, this awards function, on its own way, also represents our nation's high regard for the entire sports community of South Africa. It indicates the total commitment of our Government and all our public institutions to the promotion and development of sport and recreation amongst all our people.

This commitment derives from our knowledge that sport and recreation serve to build our nation and are an essential part of our effort to improve the quality of life of all South Africans, especially those who were deprived in the past.

All of us have been witness to the contribution of sport to this nation-building, as South Africans from all races rejoiced or grieved together and gave full support to our sports stars.

I am confident that, as we overcome the legacy of our discriminatory past, the day will come when in every major sports tournament, our teams will, like the supporters, be composed of South Africans of all colours and creeds.

Tonight we recognize and pay tribute to our talented sports men and women for being the highly motivated, highly skilled and well-trained young men and women that they are.

I am honoured and privileged to be here tonight as we pay tribute to our city's sports achievers for their outstanding performances.

We thank you for representing our community to the best of your abilities and for making us proud to be South Africans in this beautiful city of expertise and excellence.

Your commitment to excellence in your respective codes and the maintenance of high standards must serve as a reminder to all South Africans to work hard, to persevere and to strive to excel in all spheres of our national life.

I am certain that the kind of events like this one will help us to draw greater numbers of our youth into sport and prepare them to participate in the Olympic codes as well as help in our struggle to build our national identity.

I hope that the recipients of these Mayoral Sports Awards will recognize the immense responsibility that comes with the award. These awards should occupy a fond space in the hearts of many sports people of our city as role models and standard bearers.

During recent months we have had our own share of triumphs and disappointments in our international sports engagements, the trials and tribulations of the Proteas, the exquisite performance of the Boks in their last World Cup, the rise and fall, and rise again of Bafana Bafana, the list goes on and on.

Throughout it all though, we have huddled together as one nation, whether in victory or in defeat, we had cause to be proud of all our sportspeople as a giant awakening.

But our congratulations go especially to those who brought us here this evening, those receiving the Mayoral Sports Award, those who have been so central to everything we have achieved as a city in the area of sport.

May they continue along their winning ways!

I thank you all.