

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF TLOKWE MUNICIPALITY, CNLR A MAPHETLE MAPHETLE AT THE DINNER TO HOST THE SALGA BUDGET WEEK IN APRIL 15, 2008

Programme Director; for the fear of risking an oversight or over – looking our distinguished and important guest at this august gathering, allow me just to indicate that all protocol is observed.

I am aware that we have already had a very busy day looking at all the challenges facing us in our budgetary preparatory processes and that we still have another full working day tomorrow. But I look forward to hearing about the outcomes and product of this conference because I believe it will add value to the work we do as municipalities in addressing our common challenges going forward.

I must say how impressed I am already with the amount of effort put together in preparing this conference.ing of housing. I want to particularly thank the MEC for Finance, Ms Maureen Modiselle as well as SALGA as the conference sponsors. In essence, this combination of sponsors and the Provincial Department of Finance represents a very good example and gives effect to co-operative governance as espoused in our Constitution and the various pieces of legislation. This kind of a partnership can only make a positive difference in the capacity of our systems and especially in the services that we deliver to our expectant communities.

It does not escape that today's engagements comes some two years after the local government elections which took place on the 1st of March 2006 a year before the national elections scheduled for 2009. Our people's participation in the 2006 elections was premised on the legitimate expectation that they would speed up the betterment of their lives particularly in the following areas:

- the end of the use of the abominable bucket system as a means of sanitation,
- universal access to clean water, decent sanitation, and electricity, as well as
- the existence of economic and social infrastructure which is of a quantity and condition that guarantees sustainable economic development and social provisioning.

Indeed, together with our people, we understood that critical to the realization of these objectives, is a plan to make our municipal system of government work better.

As we may all be aware, in 2004 the national government carried out a Diagnostic Study of the local government sphere. This was subsequently followed by a comprehensive qualitative assessment which was done in 2005. These undertakings brought to light, two deficiencies which are desperately in need of urgent attention. The first is the challenge of weak *institutional capacity*, and the second, is the problem of *inadequate systems of accountability*.

Programme Director, no one can deny that this partnership gathered in this conference this week, including the DPLG at national level, has gone some distance in addressing these challenges through interventions such as project consolidate, to mention but one.

As a result of Project Consolidate, we have seen significant progress in, amongst others, the following areas:

- Municipalities have shown an improvement in their ability to spend the funds allocated from the national fiscuss. They are now better placed to discharge their responsibility of creating and building municipal infrastructure,

- We have also witnessed significant progress with regard to the task of redressing service-delivery backlogs. The recently published 2007 Community Survey of Statistics South Africa shows that:
 - a) the percentage of households who have access to piped water in our Province has increased from 86,6% in 1994 to 89,9% in 2007.
 - b) the percentage of households with no access to sanitation in the Province has declined from 9.6% in 1994 to 5.8% in 2007; and
 - c) whereas in 1994, only 71.8% of households in South Africa had access to electricity, in 2007 this increased to 82.5% for lighting, 65.8% for cooking and 58.9% for heating.

However, no one can equally deny that aspects of the challenges we engaged since 2006 still do invariably affect our municipalities in a big way. In order to consolidate the kind of progress I mentioned above and to continue the momentum of improvement, it is therefore all the more important for forums similar to this conference to be sustained so as to strengthen our capacities, particularly in relation to the use of the budget as a tool in our developmental effort at local level.

I believe that one of our critical and strategic focus areas, apart from the provision of municipal services, should be to improve our capacity to plan, manage and monitor infrastructure investment. As municipalities in a developmental state, better performance in these areas will greatly help us to use our budgets more effectively and fruitfully.

Programme Director, I am sure I speak for every one in this room when I say that we need to set our sights firmly on the goal of ensuring that come the end of the local government's current term, our people's best hope for a better life should not be disappointed.

Success in this regard will depend especially on the skillful performance of our duties as public representatives in our legislative bodies and executive structures, as well as we give oversight in our administrative and technical structures as well.

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen, as always, we particularly in the Municipality of Tlokwe, await the outcome of this conference with keen interest and stand ready to cascade its product down to the implementation and functional level.

I thank you all.