

# **SPEECH AT SSCA ZOC – LOC DINNER HOSTED BY EXECUTIVE MAYOR MAPHTLE MAPHETLE**

**May 28, 2008**

Programme Director

Honourable MEC Ndleleni Duma

Esteemed Guests from our neighbouring countries in the Southern Hemisphere

Government officials across all spheres present here tonight

Ladies and Gentlemen:

And all protocol observed

I would be surprised if there is still any resident of this city who by now is still not a sports fanatic. For the past two weeks this city has been talking nothing else but sports. Programme Director in the past week we hosted two major sporting events.

First it was the Executive Mayors Sports Awards ceremony whereby we acknowledged and honored those sports people from our city who have done exceptionally well in the past year. Four from those so honored will be competing in this year's Olympic games in Beijing to represent our country.

The other major event was the Vodacom Soccer Championships that determined two teams that would be competing in the Mvela Second Division next year.

It is also interesting to note the progression of these events; initially the sports awards with a *local context*, then the Vodacom championship of *national significance*, and now we are gathering to prepare a sporting event of *African significance* in our city. Who knows then what the 2010 milestone may bring us next!?

I cannot help it then but to feel so privileged tonight to be in the company of these committed sponsors and sports enthusiasts as we prepare for yet another bigger international sporting event in this city of us.

Programme Director, this city boasts sporting facilities that are counted among the best in the world. However, like many other cities in our country it is a city still reeling from the effects of apartheid past, a city of two communities – in “***a country of two nations***”; to paraphrase our State President.

The legacies of apartheid and the resultant social divisions mean that the ongoing transformation of our country’s sports is not an easy one. Divisions along the lines of race, class and gender entrenched under the apartheid system will take time to be fully addressed.

At larger scale and broader context, Programme Director, the other most cruel legacy of apartheid colonialism have played itself out so brutally and shamefully in our country as television screens have beamed images of xenophobic attacks against fellow Africans, depicting this continent of us as a continent that is at war with itself.

Whatever the causes of this mayhem and madness, all sensible South Africans, (who are fortunately in the majority) have rightfully come out strongly against it and are making their voices heard.

I do not want to go into the detail of analysing the reasons behind the cruel madness (that can and will be done by relevant people at another time). However, I would like to quote here one writer of our time, Ngila Muendane in his book 'I am an African'; and I quote "**.... Having a low self esteem means that one hates oneself. Anything a human being hates he or she wants to destroy or flee from. .... However, since there is no way that the individual who suffers from the self hate can take flight from himself or herself and cannot possibly destroy himself or herself, .... He or she then starts looking for something or someone that resemble him or her. .... this is of course another African'**

Without justifying the horrible xenophobic acts, Programme Director, but I think if indeed low self esteem is also a contributory factor in this regard, then I believe sports is also an important factor that can help to address this terrible legacy.

Sports, by its nature, has the ability to break concrete walls of self hatred and cross artificial boundaries or encampment of low self esteem. It can instill self confidence and broaden the horizons of the mind, especially at the development stages of the youth.

At the same time, the integration of our country's sports movement into continental and global sports competitions gives us an opportunity as South Africans to begin to forge not only a national identity, but an African identity as well. This is especially true of the Supreme Council of Sports in Africa Zone VI games

As we all know, the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa is a sports arm of the African Unity that was once the Organization of African Unity. It was formed in the 1960s with the main aim of using sport to achieve peace, integration and unity in Africa i.e. sport as a vehicle of encouraging people to unite irrespective of colour, economic and, political status, class and gender, let alone these colonial artificial borders that are now wreaking havoc in our country.

However, as the municipality of Tlokwe we are proud to also have a role to play in this noble objective of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, i.e. that of uniting the nations of Africa through sports.

We feel honoured to be offered the opportunity of hosting the games for this year. I can also confidently reassure everyone here that the Government is on top of the situation and that the terrible acts of xenophobia will soon be soon be a thing of the past.

I can also confidently indicate that any potential xenophobic eventuality in our city specifically can never disturb the successful hosting of the games.

In his address to the nation on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2006, the President of the Republic accordingly instructed our people to work together to arrest this development. Hence, whilst our city may not have experienced this over the past few days, we are vigilant and are acting proactively. Council have proactively drafted an action plan in partnership with the various sector partners in order stop any action that may try to develop in this regard.

This concerted effort will be kick – started by a prayer meeting organized by my office in collaboration with the Moral Regeneration Forum. Churches and members of the community in general have been invited to this prayer meeting to show goodwill and express solidarity with our fellow Africans.

The police have also called upon all individuals to report cases of suspected xenophobia to the hotline number 10111 in order to facilitate an immediate response.

Programme Director, I put it to you that what brings us together here this evening is the idea that we can be one confident block in Southern Africa, symbolized by our sporting prowess.

We must move beyond seeing our roles as limited and self-serving – a divisive vision which was perpetuated by apartheid and colonialism – to a more holistic understanding of what the game is really about.

It is based on a mutual understanding and common desire of those who collectively wish to build bridges between people who were divided. It concerns the role of sport as celebrating our athletic humanness and bring out the best we have to offer; it is about seeing sports as a crucial element in the healing of our nation.

National victories build confidence, instill a belief in self-worth and builds pride. Failure also teaches us – like the lessons from a fable or a folktale – that we must try harder next time. It intensifies our will to succeed and to endure. For sport is the stuff legends are made of.

Even the language of sport has so permeated the language of politics and the expressions of everyday life, that it sometimes seems as if we can no longer comprehend our reality without knowing what it is like to shift the goalposts or level the playing fields or instill fair play or start a whole new ball game.

Globally – for our country is no exception – sports has helped to define moral and political community and become vehicles for human identity. Sports can and must be a means by which we create new socio - political identities.

For us in present-day Africa, sport undoubtedly has the capacity to re - unite our fragmented societies and to nurture the re – discovery of our common identity.

Even in this, our city, or wherever the SCSA Zone VI games are staged, we must continue to focus on infrastructure building programmes in underdevelopment areas. Sports disciplines that have been sidelined must be brought in from the cold for our people to take up.

We must open up opportunities for everyone to be able to participate in sport and reach his or her fullest potential. This is a crucial step towards the nation building that is necessary for our moving forward as a people.

Our hosting of the SCSA Zone VI games in September - October of this year is a step in the right direction. It must encourage a spirit of friendship, a sense of belonging among the youths of our sub - continent. Yet it must also develop healthy competitiveness, for sports is often undervalued in its role as a medium for diplomacy.

Ladies and Gentlemen: as we continue with deliberation and serious plenary work for the coming days I wish you all the best and a product that will make all of us proud come October. I am certain that the collective wisdom that has gathered here since Wednesday night will indeed deliver as expected.

**I thank you all.**