

COGHSTA MEC MR BASIKOPO MAKAMU - KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE LAUNCH OF THE VHEMBE DISTRICT INTERGOVERNMENT RELATIONS FORUM

VENUE: TSHIPISE FOREVER RESORT **DATE:** 24 MAY 2022 **TIME:** 10AM

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, CLLR DOWELANI NENGUDA – IN HIS ABSENCE

MAYOR OF THULAMELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, CLLR SARAH RAMBUDA

MAYOR OF MAKHADO LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, CLLR SAMUEL MUNYAI

MAYOR OF COLLINS CHABANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, CLLR MOSES MALULEKE – IN HIS ABSENCE

MAYOR OF MUSINA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, CLLR NKHANEDZENI MAWELA

THE SPEAKER OF THE VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, CLLR TSAKANI NKONDO

AND SPEAKERS OF LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES PRESENT

THE CHIEF WHIP OF THE DISTRICT, CLLR RUDZANI LUDERE

AND CHIEF WHIPS OF LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES PRESENT

MEMBERS OF MAYORAL COMMITTEES AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

TRADITIONAL LEADERS WHO HAVE GRACED THIS EVENT, AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT US IN THEIR ABSENCE – YOU ARE HIGHLY APPRECIATED

MUNICIPAL MANAGERS AND OTHER MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS PRESENT HERE

COGHSTA DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIALS

Programme Director,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

Tomorrow marks a remarkable day not only in our province or nation, but the continent of Africa as a whole.

At times, the somber responsibilities and unrelenting pressures of our individual lives cloak our eyes from the wealth in the men and women that have gone before us, and from our inheritance as a people.

We so easily forget that we shoot as branches from the formidable givers of life, from tribes led by undisputed giants who selflessly defended their independence.

We stand on the shoulders of the wisdom that thrived in the valleys and ruled from the hills. Political, Traditional and Community leaders overshadow the books of history as calculating militant warriors and wise-men, who humiliated and withstood the barrages of colonial attack. They are the true sons of the soil, protecting our land against gunpowder and lead, with only wooden spears and ancestral war cries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tomorrow we gather with the rest of the continent to celebrate Africa day. And perhaps at times we require the strands of history to reach out and draw us from the present. To allow ourselves to be submerged in the rivers of our rich history.

Indeed, as we commemorate this important day. We dare not forget the indispensable contributions of our forefathers in the bloody war for our country's liberation. Truly, as we celebrate our identity as Africans, the words of Bob Marley ring true – “in this great future, you cannot forget your past”.

Programme Director,

It gives me great pleasure today to congratulate the executive mayor of the Vhembe district municipality, local mayors under the district, Speakers and councilors in their various capacities for being elected in the positions that you occupy. While it may have been a hard-fought victory for yourselves personally, it is however a call to service from the people who have elected you.

It is vital to remember that you may belong to a political party, but while in office, your responsibility is not towards the political party you have sworn allegiance to, it is to your entire community. The delivery of basic services and the general improvement of the quality of the lives of South Africans under your municipalities are obligations that fall squarely on you and I.

For this reason these Intergovernmental Forums, that are constitutionally empowered, become pivotal as they allow a confluence of information, minds and other resources that are within our grasp to serve our communities.

They are aimed at creating a perfect platform for engagement, with only one purpose, that is to deal decisively with all service delivery issues affecting our institutions.

Programme Director,

The year 2022 marks 28 years since the dawn of our democracy in 1994. We are fast approaching the 3 decades milestone of the country's constitutional democracy and local governance.

As such, this development comes with a deep call and yearning for a more mature – well-oiled and functioning local sphere of government for our people.

Local government is at the coalface of what and how the fine concept of governance and democracy are meant to be to our people. The freedom that we hold dear can only be truly fully manifested to our people, if local government functions as a peg for the provincial and national government's full expression.

Our democracy can only be fully expressed if our local government has a healthy financial outlook and provides the basic services that are the due to our communities.

Programme Director,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We meet at a time when the COVID-19 Lockdown levels have been at their most relaxed in a little over two years as a result of the outstanding work done by our government and health workers. I understand that one of the major challenges to the Inter-Governmental Forums meeting regularly last year and the year before that was due to the lockdown regulations.

I have observed passed two years how some of our districts and their IGR Forums surrendered to the challenges of COVID19 and did not hold their quarterly meetings as they were required to. But I must give credit where it is due. You here at the Vhembe District, held your IGRs faithfully.

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on this. Municipal Managers and Mayors alike you were always true to hold the meetings of these structures at the agreed date. For that you deserve an applause.

Now that we are, as a country, at a point where we can meet physically, I expect you

to continue holding these forums with no challenges. There is consequently no reason for the forums not to take place once per quarter.

As you set your sights to the months and years ahead, I encourage that Municipal Managers continue to schedule these Forums, and for you Mayors to set aside time to attend them. I want to discourage you from the temptation of constantly swapping members of the forum, this has the unenviable result of depleting the forum of institutional memory. Adhere to the internal rules of the forum, and follow up on the resolutions taken at these meetings. This will further solidify the running of this important structure.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a government, we are swiftly moving towards integrated budgeting and planning through the District Development Model, as championed by our President, His Excellency Vho-Matamela Ramaphosa.

The two are not only concepts, nor are they operating in silos. DDM and Inter-government relations are how we operate government coherently and effectively. They are closely linked, and in fact, draw strength from each other.

The DDM is driven by the Premier of the Province through the Premier Intergovernmental Forum and supporting structures, including the very structure we are establishing today.

The Office of the Premier, CoGHSTA and Provincial Treasury are coordinating the process to finalize the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) of municipalities, as well as District wide 5 year IDP's and the long term DDM District One Plans per district.

The 5 year IDP will serve as a tool to implement long term district one plans reflecting priority catalytic projects for each district space.

All priority projects in the District One Plans, based on the comparative and competitive advantage of each district space, within all three spheres including Provincial and local spheres of government as well as State Owned Entities, should be aligned to the LDP priorities and DDM principles and monitoring to be reported on quarterly basis.

The District Development Model aims to improve the coherence of government service delivery, and IGR forums such as this one here in the Vhembe will play a very important supporting role to the success thereof.

Programme Director,

Just a few weeks ago we held a virtual meeting to discuss the Recovery Plans for your Municipal Infrastructure Grants. We know that as a district the underspending on the MIG rests on over R300 million.

We cannot for any reason or moment be evaded by the monumental purpose of this grant, which is for the eradication of municipal infrastructure backlogs in poor communities to ensure the provision of basic services such as water, sanitation, roads and community lighting. Each mayor and municipal manager here have presented their plans to spend this money within the end of June deadline.

Mayors, I want to plead with you to monitor that the money is spent according to the recovery plans you presented, that copies of these plans are submitted to our department to ensure we oversee this process and that the deadline is adhered to.

There is no reminder necessary of the dire need to develop our communities especially when the provisions are made available.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Just a month ago, Premier Chupu Mathabatha, Treasury MEC, Seaparo Sekwati and myself met with the Auditor General, Tsakani Maluleke to discuss the province's Municipal Audit Outcomes for the 2020/21 Financial Year.

You will be aware by now that according to her report, 4 municipalities regressed, 4 improved, while 14 and 5 maintained unqualified and qualified audit outcomes respectively. On that note, I want to unreservedly celebrate the Waterberg District Municipality for achieving a Clean Audit Outcome.

The Vhembe District has been one of our pillars of healthy municipal finance as a province as most of your municipalities remain on an Unqualified audit finding.

Of these municipalities, Thulamela has anchored the district with unqualified audit outcomes since the 2016/17 financial year. While it was celebrated in the past, Mayor, this can no longer be celebrated. It is time to improve to a clean audit, you have demonstrated the requisite knowledge and ability to do so over the years.

The same goes for Vhembe District municipality who have remained on a Qualified outcome since the 2017/18 Financial years. We recognize your improvement from a disclaimer four years ago, but it is time to move up again Mayor.

As a District Municipality, we expect that Vhembe District sets the example for local municipalities instead of being the lowest on the list.

We are however unhappy that two of our municipalities in the province have regressed to disclaimer audit opinions. The Mopani District Municipality and Bela Bela Local Municipality. When this administration of Premier Mathabatha took over, it did so under extremely undesirable financial conditions.

Not many had confidence that the province would be able to recover, but we did. It is for this reason that we cannot compromise on the financial health of our municipalities, and as such any disclaimer findings must be treated with the utmost urgency and seriousness.

We have begun interactions with these municipalities to ensure that the necessary support is provided to see them improve.

The non-submission of procurement documents and non-compliance with the MFMA generally are also worrying trends.

It was also an observation and a concern raised by the Auditor General that there is a high reliance on consultants by our municipalities. Section 62 of the MFMA places responsibilities on the accounting officer of a municipality to manage the financial administration of a municipality.

I am certain that we have CFOs and warm bodies in our financial offices in these municipalities, we spend a lot of money on their salaries.

If we pay you and you are redundant, what is the reason for having you in the municipality's employ? There is an impression created that consultants are a permanent solution, and that way, hired human resource in finance can relax. It cannot be this way.

We understand that in some instances there is a capacity challenge, and in those situations, we encourage that these consultants are used to provide a skills transfer so that their lifespan with the municipality is reduced.

The high vacancy rate of critical positions in the municipality is not something that should be allowed to continue either.

It is incumbent on you colleagues to change this trajectory and improve the financial outlook of these municipalities. COGHSTA, Treasury and SALGA are at your disposal, use them wisely.

In addition, we have recently launched the provincial Municipal Public Accounts Committee to help enhance oversight in municipalities. I encourage a good working relationship between the various speakers of municipalities and MPAC Chairs. MPAC researchers as well must be given support to hold the various executives at municipalities accountable.

I must emphasize on the matter of MPAC Researchers. Mayors, lets appoint qualified researchers who can analyse and understand matters within MPAC.

In closing ladies and gentlemen,

I want to remind you that only good governance and ethical leadership is expected from all of you. In the main, the people of Vhembe District are looking upon this leadership that has gathered here today, for solutions to all their challenges. We dare not fail them.

I thank you.