

**OPENING ADDRESS BY THE MEC JERRY NDOU DURING
THE MEC/MAYOR's FORUM HELD ON 15 MAY 2018 -
POLOKWANE, BOLIVIA LODGE**

MEC Rob Tooley;

Chairperson of SALGA Cllr. Thembi Nkadimeng;

Executive Mayors, Mayors and Speakers of our Municipalities;

Chairpersons of MPAC's;

Head of Departments, Ms Ngaka Dumalisile and Mr Gavin Pratt;

Municipal Managers and CFOs;

Senior Management and Officials of the Departments of Coghsta and Provincial Treasury;

Our Stakeholders and all Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address this important gathering where we are expected to take a stock of

where we are in terms of provision of basic services to the people of Limpopo.

Colleagues, our gathering this morning comes during the first quarter of our 2018/19 financial year and the last quarter of Local Government financial year to discuss significant service delivery matters on issues faced by our municipalities across the province. This is without doubt a significant event which involves presentations, updates and wider participation from the decision-makers across the province within the local government sphere. May I remind you that this will indeed be a fruitful engagement which I'm sure will take local government in our province to another level.

Colleagues, the MEC/Mayor's Forum provides a platform for us to make a reflection on the commitments we made for ourselves to achieve and assess progress regarding service delivery to our people at local government. As you all of you know by now, local government remains the cornerstone of our

government. It is at local government level that our performance as government in general is being judged. It is in this sphere of government where things are happening, regardless of whether it is delivered by national or provincial government. It therefore goes without saying that, the local sphere of government can construct or destruct us as government. It is therefore of utmost important that from time to time, we need to gather in this fashion and make some reflections of where we are, so as to chart a way forward.

This we do, Colleagues, to ensure that we put extra efforts in delivering excellent services by “putting people first”. The engagements in this forum are to ignite excellence in the provision of basic services. It also aims to review performance in the previous months with an ultimate goal of identifying our strength and weaknesses.

We therefore all of us have a responsibility to build this sphere of government because the yardstick to measure the success of it; finds expression in each one of us, and all of us as a collective. We must also work together to relegate underperformance to the margins through lifting ourselves by our bootstraps to become the leading sphere of government in the service of humanity.

Colleagues, for the purpose of this round of engagements, we have identified four critical areas of discussions; Municipal Financial Status, Municipal Infrastructure Grant Spending, implementation of remedial audit action plans, preparations for 2017/18 annual financial statements and mitigation and recovery of ESKOM and Water Boards.

As we have indicated during our departmental Budget Vote presentation, these are the areas that in most cases find us wanting.

We continue to grapple with the challenge of implementation of the audit remedial action plans and resolving audit findings. Our

observation shows that the municipalities that implement their audit action plans do improve in their audit outcomes in the subsequent years. It is in this regard that we continue to make a call to all municipalities to ensure that these plans are implemented.

Colleagues, our Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) constitutes one of the major programmes for infrastructure roll-out in the local government sphere. Our continual underspending in this area of performance is a great area of concern and worrisome. Early this year on 09 March, we had an engagement with municipalities that are underspending on their MIG. Recovery Plans were presented and as the situation presents itself now, it seems this is not working. I therefore would like to persuade this gathering to look into this challenge and accordingly share best practices especially from performing municipalities in the spending of this grant.

In the same breadth Colleagues, this sitting should as well look at the old challenge relating to debts owed to ESKOM and

Water Boards. There are some of the municipalities that are doing well in this area. However, some of our municipalities enter into repayment agreements with these agencies and unfortunately renege or dishonour in implementation; leading to a situation where disconnection actions being taken against them. Similarly, let us engage and find best possible ways to address this issue.

Let me hasten to say, to a greater deal we have succeeded in defining for ourselves what it really means to get the basic right in local government. Getting the basics right as reflected in the Back to Basic programme is nothing more than coming up with a plan to ensure that:

- The concerns of our people are put first, through effective public participation;
- Creating conditions for decent living by consistently delivering municipal services of the right quality and standard;

- Fostering good governance by cutting down on wastage, spending money prudently, hiring competent officials and ensuring transparency and accountability;
- Sound financial management and accounting;
- And lastly building and maintaining sound institutional and administrative capabilities at all levels;

Colleagues, one of the resolutions taken from the Local Government Summit in 2017 is that as leaders of Local Government, we should intensify the implementation of the multi-sectoral 2016-2021 Local Government Agenda which was adopted at the summit.

Priority must be given to such pressing issues such as high vacancy rates and managing poor political-administrative interface which often contributes to instability and the collapse of governance in municipalities.

Colleagues, as a matter of strengthening Local Government on governance, let me thank our Accounting Officer of CoGHSTA,

Ms. Ngaka Dumalisile for re-establishing the HOD-Municipal Managers forum which convened in March 2018 to discuss operational matters in Local Government .I am quite certain that the resolutions taken in that forum will go a long way in assisting the Premier/IGR Forum which will now start taking place on quarterly basis. I also expect HOD-Municipal Managers forum to meet on quarterly basis and as when need arises from now onwards.

As a department we re-commit ourselves to continue our support to all our municipalities in the province. Similarly, we commit ourselves to do all this in collaboration with our Provincial Treasury Department. Indeed working together we can do more.

As I conclude let me extend my sincere gratitude for making time to take this convergence serious. I anticipate fruitful deliberations which will achieve our set objectives.

Thank you.