

SPEECH DELIVERED BY ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL/HOD OF DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING,NORTH WEST:- MR MONNAPULA JOHNNY MOTLOGELWA AT THE 9th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND NATIONAL IMASA CONFERENCE HELD ON 07 JUNE 2007 AT BRITS,DIHKOLOLO

Programme Directors, Bernie Groenewald and George Moroane

IMASA President and the entire leadership,

Executive Mayor of Madibeng,clr Sophy Molokwane

Executive Mayors and Mayors present

Municipal Managers and former Municipal Managers present,

Various professionals and members here present

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen:

Protocol observed.

I am humbled to address this auspicious gathering of IMASA on the occasion of its 9th Annual General Meeting and National Conference. It happens just 12 months after the country's second democratic local government elections. I should hasten to say that I believe, that the new crop of councillors and municipal officials would indeed rise to the occasion by ensuring that as government we reach the 2014 millennium goals.

Allow me, therefore, to extend a warm word of welcome to the new crop of officials and also pay recognition to those of you who have been a pillar of strength since the establishment of the new system of local government. You are indeed a critical foundation on which all future endeavours depend.

Ladies and Gentlemen I have been requested to talk about local government in South Africa, I am sure you will agree with me, that anyone requested to talk about this topic, can do so for the whole day or two, or even a week. I am saying so precisely because local government has a very long and critical history which we must always remember, reflect on it, and that must sharpen our ways of handling the present mandate and associated challenges, critical to that, we need to determine a much more practical agenda which I believe we have sincerely began, The Local Government Five Year Strategic Agenda(LGSA)2006-2011.

During the last term, South Africa's first democratically elected local government focused primarily on the development of policy frameworks, structures and systems to give effect to the values and principles of the *Constitution* and to lay the foundation for democratic government based on equality, equity and social justice.

Although issues concerning service delivery had not been neglected, much of the new Government's energy had gone into developing an appropriate climate and policy framework for transformation and development. Considerable progress has been made in this regard as can be witnessed by a myriad of policy papers and legislation in nearly issue of government which evolved in the first years of democratic local government. As the new policy frameworks were being put into place, attention increasingly shifted to the most critical issue confronting the South African Public Service today: the issue of service delivery.

Programme Director, I am proud to be a South African for I am aware that ours is a winning nation. In the first twelve years of our democracy, we have put in place credible systems of government across all spheres, with a dedicated focus on local sphere. Other than sustaining the most progressive Constitution in the world, we have in deed graduated as one of the admired and shining lights in deepening democracy in Africa and the world. We must recall that after two terms of democratic elections in our country, the world declared that our elections process is so mature that it was not necessary to send observer missions to our elections in April 2004. This is a heartening sign of respect and approval from a world inclined to be sceptical about the commitment of African countries to embracing credible democratic principles.

Despite these resounding victories and accolades, we are still faced by various challenges, to name but few:- the creation of sustainable jobs at our respective localities, and the fight against HIV/AIDS which poses a serious threat on skills and the economy. Integrating local economic development and poverty alleviation is not an easy task. It is bedeviled by the historical and generic tension often inherent in the economic growth-development, equity-efficiency debates so on and so forth. However, this need not be a major issue, because the appropriate macro-economic framework has been established to enable local governments to pursue a people-centered approach that addresses the vulnerabilities and social exclusion associated with poverty.

We are however humbled and assured by the fact that these challenges are being continuously handled by our municipalities in cooperative governance with other spheres of government. There is constant monitoring of local government performance in order to effectively deal

with these challenges. Significantly, the traditional local government functions have been regularly assessed and reviewed.

Gathering here as local government practitioners, we must respond to these challenges collectively with the sole aim of improving our ability to do things differently and optimising our impact.

In order for us to remain focused on issues at hand, we need continuous training and review of our training courses, We need to share experiences so that best practices can be learnt and replicated. We need to explore all measures necessary to retain the skills we have developed and nurtured. We need to partner with various institutions in our country and the world and run world class leadership programme for current and aspirant local government officials. The plan should be intended to develop a cadre of seasoned managers who can think beyond boundaries of their localities.

Through the 5 Year LGSA,an analysis has been done per KPA and some of the following findings were observed:-

Initially, the purpose was to assess some of the main lessons arising from the first term of local government in order to achieve a fully viable and consolidated local government system in the second term. The exercise also sought to reflect on progress in Project Consolidate and lessons from practice that must inform local government policy refinement. It also focused on selected areas of practical and policy intervention with the greatest potential for improving municipal performance and creating a better life for all South Africans. The commitment we must all embrace.

Programme Director, the central question we must all ask is: “What must be done in the current term of local government (2006-2011)?”

Surely it can't be just another term, we can learn no more, we need to do things faster!!!!

The main findings that emanated from the analysis of work done indicated that:- In terms of KPAs:-

1. Institutional Capacity and Municipal Transformation

The main challenges are that:-

- Core municipal systems were not established or implemented, e.g. PMS**
- Municipal management capacity and capability was a serious concern and there existed high vacancy levels of critical positions.**
- Poor accountability mechanisms leading to bad audit reports**
- Serious challenges in the areas of financial management, programme management, engineering and organisational development.**

2. Basic Service Delivery and Infrastructure

The main challenges are that:-

- There is a slow pace and poor quality of services delivered, thus resulting in huge under expenditure in critical programmes such as Municipal Infrastructure Grant**

- Water and sanitation backlogs emerge as one of the critical challenges, with varying data from different sources.
- Housing backlog sighted as a critical issue and thus demanding among others strict municipal bylaws and land use management systems to curb perpetuation of land invasions.

3. Local Economic Development

The main challenges are that:-

- High levels of poverty due to unemployment
- Poor quality LED plans and scarcity of municipal LED specialists to help municipalities to develop bankable plans.

4. Financial Viability and Management

The main challenges are that:-

- Inadequate billing, debt management and credit control systems
- Poor municipal financial management capacity and systems
- Low revenue base due to high levels of indigents

5. Good Governance

- Instability within and between political and administrative domains
- Poor communication between council and communities
- Non functioning of ward committees

Ladies and Gentlemen, clearly, the two main problems that underlie the performance of municipalities are poor capacity and inadequate accountability mechanisms. This term of Local Government must result in

a more sustainable system, with reliable service delivery and a general improvement in Government's performance as a whole.

On the basis of a detailed analysis of the status quo of local government, three overarching strategic priorities for the current term of Local Government were identified, vide:-

- Mainstreaming hands-on support to Local Government to improve municipal governance, performance and accountability;
- Addressing the structure and governance arrangements of the State in order to better strengthen, support and monitor Local Government; and
- Refining and strengthening the policy, regulatory and fiscal environment for Local Government and giving greater attention to the enforcement measures.

Ideally, we need to ensure in line with the AGENDA,-

That ours are functional municipalities that are both effective and efficient, these requires both systems and responsiveness. In situations where there opposite obtains, we must introduce measures to address differential capacities of the municipalities and focus on time-bound outcomes with a major emphasis on the role of national departments and provincial government. This will of course require adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

In its endeavour to mainstream hands-on support to Local Government, the department of provincial and local government and provincial departments of local government continue to nationally coordinate,

facilitate, direct and monitor the priority hands-on support actions of national government to local government by improving its own institutional arrangements and internal capability.

It is imperative, that we also reiterate our call to SALGA to intensify its support to the political leadership of municipalities by consistently engaging in a structured programme of capacity building and training, this will go further in stabilising the political and administrative components of municipalities and unblock political problems that negatively affect the service delivery and support actions directed at municipalities.

Programme Director, planning has since reached a paradigm shift. IDP Processes have invariably improved, affording communities an opportunity to make meaningful contribution and thus planners of their own future. *The challenge is for the people to understand that development is a process of empowerment and self-reliance. Accordingly, our communities must not be wards of benevolent guardians, rather they must be architects of their own sustained upliftment. The IDP engagement processes and hearings have enriched greater alignment of IDPs with PGDS and NSDP.*

In order to ensure that appropriate skills are recruited and retained, the Competency framework was promulgated by the Minister, of the advertisements I have seen, I can count those that sought to implement this requirement. It should be acknowledged that failure thereof can only serve to compromise our broader objectives. This also compromises compliance with the promulgated competency framework and senior

management key competency requirements as prescribed by DPLG and National Treasury.

In an effort to resource Local Government, sourcing and deploying hands-on technical capacity to municipalities has been effected. In some cases, lack of internal personnel posed serious challenges and undermined the efforts and programme objectives. Engineers, Financial experts and lately, planners have been deployed in selected municipalities, Ladies and Gentlemen, we must at this stage, pause and salute our strategic partners, Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) and SAICE as well as IMFO for their generous offer and unprecedented support in making local government work better for our communities.

Our major mandate is to ensure that all communities have access to clean water and decent sanitation by 2010, that all houses have access to electricity by 2012 and that there is universal provision of Free Basic Services. I am referring to these, well aware that all of us should and shall have eradicated the bucket system in December this year as defined.

Nationally, there are still challenges of under expenditure of some allocations such as MIG programme, this is a direct contradiction given the percentage of backlogs we still have. This has necessitated the development of a national Municipal Infrastructure Investment Strategy that will be a roadmap to achieving universal access. It is anticipated that this will improve *government capacity to spend*

What is it that we have to do in order to achieve desired results??

Over and above all these other initiatives, we need to ensure that the intergovernmental systems are strengthened to benefit local government by principally implementing the IGR Framework legislation in letter and spirit. We must continue to Identify and mobilise the resources (human, financial and otherwise) that currently reside within the government system,we also need to address impediments and bottlenecks and mediate conflicts that would otherwise inhibit the progress and success of the intervention. Finally we need to provide greater attention to enforcing existing aspects of local government legislation;

Progressively, Districts have started to assume the development facilitator and coordinator role as local delivery capacity develops and is supported by national and provincial government. The District development facilitation and coordination functions should be more clearly defined.Proposals should be developed on a district shared service model. The district could in future become a useful institutional base to which national and provincial services and officials are deconcentrated.

Current legislation, i.e. the Municipal Structures Act, make it discretionary for municipalities to adopt the ward committee system of community participation. This has contributed to the uneven establishment rate and levels of functionality of ward committees across the country.

Relevant legislation should be amended to make it mandatory for all municipalities to adopt the ward committee system for community participation

First term of democratic local government has been one of the most complex projects of state transformation since 1994. The tasks of local government transformation have proven to be more complex and protracted than was initially anticipated.

Project Consolidate has sharpened our understanding of the problems and challenges in the local government sphere and has led us to the conclusion that we need to mainstream hands-on support to local government in general over the next 5 years. Project Consolidate would have ceased to exist as a time-bound measure directed at particular municipalities.

Let take this opportunity to remind colleagues that we must be conscious of the fact that we are a crop of professionals who must have proper thinking to influence society, cognisant of the fact that problems of today will not be solved by the level of thinking employed when they were create. We therefore have to think differently and seek for new solutions every morning we wake up and every evening we rest. Cognisant of the fact that there are those who has no comfort to enjoy at all. No Shelter, No Water, Nor any form of energy save for wood hewed during the day as they unwillingly had nothing to do.

In conclusion, may I take this opportunity to thank the delegates and various members for listening. Allow me Programme Director to quote our State President, Thabo Mbeki on his SONA when he said

“Acting together, we do have the capacity to realise these objectives. And sparing neither effort nor strength, we can and shall build a South Africa that truly belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity!”

President Thabo Mbeki, 11 February 2005

This is affirmed by our setswana expression that says “morota nosi ga a epe mosima” We need to move and act more collectively.

Have a successful AGM and Conference and all stakeholders including provincial and national spheres of our government are looking forward to interact with your resolutions in an endeavour to improve the quality of life of our people.

Thank you