



**OPENING AND WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE SEDIBENG DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY EXECUTIVE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR MAHOLE SIMON MOFOKENG ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE AGRIBEE EMPOWERMENT PROJECT IN HEIDELBURG**

20 February 2009.

- Ms. Njabulo Ndluli, Programme Director and Director General of the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs;
- Mr. Kgalema Motlanthe, Hounarable President of the Republic of South Africa;
- Ms. Lulu Xingwana, National Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs;
- Mr. Paul Mashatile, Premier of Gauteng;

- Mr. Kgabisi Mosunkutu, Member of the Gauteng Provincial Government Executive Committee, responsible for Agriculture, Conservation and Environment;
- Executive Mayors and fellow councillors who are present;
- And, our most important guests who come from the agriculture sector. We have in our midst, representatives of various farmer organizations, some of which are still in the emerging state and some are well established commercial farmers. I have earlier-on spotted colleagues from the National African Farmers Union (NAFU), Women-in-Agriculture and Rural Development (WARD) and Youth-in-Agriculture and Rural Development (YARD);
- Representatives of various media houses, present;
- Comrades, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

**Comrade President,**

As I rise to greet and welcome each and every one of you to Sedibeng, I also wish to join the multitudes of the people of South Africa in applauding the 52<sup>nd</sup> National Conference of the ruling party, the African National Congress, for having ensured that rural development occupies a priority position in government programmes.

For us in the Sedibeng Region, which is located in the rural part of Gauteng, that resolution is especially welcomed, as it implies an end to poverty and unemployment.

**Comrade Minister,**

The State of the Nation's Address and the Budget speech earlier in the Month, only served to confirm that our long-held hopes are being accommodated; that it should be the State's role and responsibility to invest in underdeveloped areas and to direct and influence private sector investment.

This makes us to feel as an integral part of the broader South African family.

**Comrade Premier,**

It would also constitute a severe error of judgment, if we did not presently commend all the participating farming organizations for providing leadership on this pertinent matter which affects the majority of our people in Sedibeng, which other people of a lesser caliber would have done probably everything to avoid.

**Comrades and Colleagues,**

Please, allow me at this juncture to deviate and entice you with some of our strategies and programmes which I have no doubt that you will all find very much impressive:

- We have identified suitable land for value-adding agricultural activities and agricultural hubs;

- Working in conjunction with the Locals and other spheres of governments, we have facilitate the establishment of an all-inclusive representative Sedibeng Farmer's Forum;
- We are supporting the process of land restitution and have established post settlement programmes for new land owners;
- We are continuously engaging the Vereeniging Fresh Produce on opportunities of supply of produce by emerging farmers;
- We are compiling a comprehensive SMME database for the District and assisting with the funding for cooperatives and other emerging small business formations;
- We are also coordinating and facilitating training programmes for SMME's including with the Gauteng Enterprise Propeller (GEP), Department of Labour, Tourism Enterprise Project (TEP) and relevant Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA's); and,
- We are implementing outcomes of a BBBEE Summit to be held on 1 April 2008, and are developing and implementing a concept of 'Business Week' to segment

and organize parallel tracks, varied exhibitions needs for general, different industries and business needs;

With this clear road-map, we are set to overcome all the obstacles, especially now in the face of the revitalized cooperative development that is emerging between various spheres of government, government with the private sector and communities.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

This historic launch of the AgriBEE Empowerment Project, which takes place under the most appropriate theme of, ***“Working together, We can do more to build a united and prosperous agriculture sector in South Africa”***, brings us even much more closer to fulfilling a dream of our ancestors, of bringing about sustainable livelihoods in our communities, by supporting lives and meeting individual and community needs.

**And lastly,**

The doors of our local municipalities are still open for those of us who have missed the final voter registration weekend. Please make sure that your name appears on the voter's roll so that you can make your mark on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

I thank you.