



**Keynote Address by the Sedibeng District Municipality Executive Mayor, Cllr. Mahole Simon Mofokeng on the occasion of the Sedibeng Tourism Awards on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010, at the Riverside Hotel, Vanderbijlpark, in Sedibeng**

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Programme Director; Ms. Lillian Dube

My counterparts, and colleagues, Executive Mayors Cllr. Mshudulu, Cllr. Nast, Cllr. Modisakeng from our Local Municipalities;

Speakers from our Local Municipalities;

Chief Whips;

Members of Mayoral Committees;

Councillors;

Senior Managers and Officials from Sedibeng, our Local Municipalities;

Representatives from various institutions here present;

Our valued sponsors;

Miss Emfuleni;

Media personnel present;

People of Sedibeng;

I take this opportunity to welcome you all today to this auspicious event. It is my honour and pleasure that I today, join many of you here tonight to showcase what I have always been saying to the world outside about you and what you as Sedibeng offer.

I have always maintained with pride my invitation to the outside world to visit Sedibeng to enjoy true African experience, blended with modern day outdoor and wildlife excitement that is uniquely and proudly Sedibeng.

I have always invited the world to Sedibeng to come and enjoy the hospitality of the myriad of Hotels, Lodges and Bed & Breakfast accommodation, special cuisines, exotic and un-spoilt river view most of all, our people and their friendly as well as ready smile.

This friendliness, smile and humility that has come to define what sets Sedibeng Tourism, leisure and hospitality apart from the rest, is found and embedded in our culture of service excellence that has come to characterise this industry all over the District, the likes of which are to be found nowhere in the country.

This is so because the Vaal River is one of the very few navigable and passable rivers in South Africa and indeed the African continent.

**Brothers & Sisters,** it is interesting and encouraging to note that the Sedibeng Tourism Awards programme is the inaugural event of its kind to recognise service excellence in the tourism industry and encourage local tourism and hospitality businesses in our Region to keep achieving high standards.

The awards which will be issued out tonight will not only give recognition to excellence in service, quality, creativity and hospitality, but will also highlight the region as a quality tourist destination. These awards will be organised by the District in conjunction with Local Municipalities and the Regional Tourism Organization, supported by the Gauteng Tourism Authority and Tourism Enterprise Partnership.

**Programme Director,** this will surely continue to promote Sedibeng as a region of excellence and as a preferred Tourist Destination, which coincides with our primary objective with this Tourism Awards Ceremony tonight. This must be a collective responsibility.

Ke Nako - South Africa's time has come, Sedibeng tsohang, baeti ke bao ba kena kgorong ya Motse. Behang dipitsa ifo, lokisang Basadi. Dimenyemenya, le hle le dihate, ho kgaowe moo ho kgwehlang-Ya senang sekaja, Mmae a tele, a telle motella ruri.

It is with the above, that I call on the entire communities of Sedibeng District Municipality to put their best foot forward to welcome the three

nations that are going to be based in our District in preparation for the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup.

**Ladies & Gentlemen**, surely there is something special we are doing right collectively as Local Government and this industry in this region that we must grow even bigger if Sedibeng as a non 'host city', and yet we have attracted three (3) National Football Teams into our borders. I guess by now you are all aware that, Ivory Coast and Switzerland have their team based camps in this region.

I am sure that some of you are beginning to think that my arithmetic is wrong because I only spoke about two (2) teams and the third team is the one that presents us with the greatest challenge. Mexico, our very opponent in our first game at the Opening Ceremony on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2010, will be using Waterstone College in Meyerton as their training facility.

Our biggest and daunting challenge is to make sure that, this team, Mexico, gets maximum hospitality and every support with their food, traveling and facilities in the spirit of FIFA's theme of 'Fair Play' and Bafana Bafana will do the rest and make all of us proud, come match time at 16h00 on the 11 June 2010.

These Sedibeng District Tourism Awards 2010 could not have come at a better time. 51 Days before the first kick-off of the 2010 FIFA World Cup

on the African soil. The entire world is looking at our country and its ability to host a major event, it is not as if they don't know our capacity to do so, neither is it in doubt.

As a Country we have hosted the Rugby World Cup, the Cricket World Cup as well as the Twenty 20 Cricket World Cup and most recently, the Indian Premier League, when India was incapable of doing so.

Let us all take up the cudgels and respond to this clarion call. The Kudu horn is loud and clear. Switzerland, Ivory Coast and Mexico, could not have chosen a better place to set up their base camps. Let us show the world that there is indeed no better place to stay in the economic capital of South Africa and of Africa, the Gauteng Province than the Vaal, the Industrial Capital of Gauteng on the Great River Lekoa-The home of the Brave.

It is no coincidence therefore, that these awards are for Service Excellence. Sedibeng District, while not a Host City, has a very critical role to play in the nature and successful execution of the 2010 FIFA World Cup mandate: To provide base - camp facilities for the three nations that will be participating in the World Cup and accommodate thousands of visitors who will flock our area during this period.

This mandate enjoins us to provide excellent services to the fans and players of these three countries, not to mention the fact that Nike International, will be setting up its office here in District.

The amount of exotic foods and Cuisines, and beverages that will be tumbling from wells and streams of our Vaal River, personified from your master brewers of Heineken, SAB, Coca Cola, Pepsi products and of course our African beer, our people, our environment and ever ready friendly smile that has come to be synonymous with our service excellence to be provided will be large.

The manner in which these beverages and food are to be presented, will determine the perception and impression that our visitors are going to have of both Sedibeng and the country as a whole.

The Sedibeng experience can never be left to chance. All of the participants in the various categories will serve as Goodwill Ambassadors for our District. I have no doubt in my mind that you will do us proud in the hospitality and tourism sector I have come to enjoy from your establishments every time I visit and host business, friends, family and my colleagues.

Ha ele mona baeti ba rona ba sentse ba menahane le mehlala, mefao ese e tlangwe ho tla kwano hae mona, ke eng e kalo eo ba e lebeleletseng ho rona? We are expected to open our warm homes and hearts to

welcome our visitors from all these three countries, and others who may decide to be in Sedibeng where it is established that we are at the centre of about 6 stadiums where World Cup games will be played in.

Let us bowl them over with our warm hospitality, feed them and show them the infinite beauty of Sedibeng, with its perennial River Lekoa and once we get that right, experience shows that long after World Cup is over, that great impression we shall have created will turn into leisure tourism next time the same people visit our country and this time, they will heap praises of their experience and will certainly bring family, or even business tourism.

The number of Hospitality establishments here present, lives me with no doubt as to our ability to provide a lasting impression to the visitors. Give yourselves a big round of applause; for indeed you have brought a sense of eternal pride in the manner you have and continue to conduct your business.

Hakena qeaeo le ha nyenyane hore lona bohle le tla ema lele mala a laotswe, le fadimehile hore baeti bana ba rona, ba fumantshwa matsoho a mofuthu a kamohelo le tshireletso Lebatoweng lena la rona la Sedibeng.

As the front row and the coal face of our interaction with our visitors, I enjoin all the participants in these prestigious awards, and those who for some reason chose not to enter the competition this year, to throw caution

to the wind as they seek to provide world class service to our visitors, provide them with the Sedibeng experience they will never forget.

Let them leave here at the end of the 2010 FIFA World Cup with both a sense of longing and belonging, for indeed, Sedibeng District Municipality is the Cradle of Human Rights Struggles.

On the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sharpeville Massacre and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the release of former State President Tata Nelson Mandela, let our visitors connect with the spirit that propelled this region and the entire country to say” South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and White” and they will be welcome to stay.

**Programme Director**, it is therefore imperative for all of us keep in mind the importance of this Tourism Awards. Its objectives and goals are to encourage and demonstrate fair and responsible business practice by the tourism industry players, while linking emerging and small scale enterprises to consumer markets and businesses and will ultimately result in the following:

- Promotion of Sedibeng as a region of excellence and a preferred tourist destination;
- Raising through the sign-up and publicity programme, awareness of service excellence as an important element in competitiveness;
- Acknowledging, reward and promote service excellence in the tourism

industry within the region;

- Raising enthusiasm among service providers and product owners, get their commitment towards improvement of and maintaining standards and provide fresh impetus to their pursuit of service excellence;
- Providing a benchmark for best practice within the tourism industry;
- Encouraging innovation and generate capacity in the various sectors within the tourism industry;
- Showcasing quality products/facilities through various activities including a dedicated brochure, displays at various exhibitions and distribution of information at all local tourism information offices in Sedibeng.
- Presenting, through the Awards Ceremony, an annual platform of celebration for the tourism industry, offering networking opportunities for business, media and the wider community.

This latter point is crucial for me in that, it is my wish that if your establishment is highly supported and fully booked, your frontline staff should know that, in the motto of this industry within Sedibeng, it is permissible for them to phone other establishments or the so called competitors to check availability and refer guests for any service in the value chain of tourism and hospitality.

**Ladies & Gentlemen**, please understand this not as a censor or praising caution but a fair representation of our situation. I mean the front line staff

at government offices, in our homes and indeed at your establishments should not hide our weaknesses or areas of challenge but they equally do not have to exaggerate and bad mouth our region, our country and our Continent especially on the stability of our region, crime situation, safety and offerings in the region.

I assure you that, this is not a statement that seeks to limit freedom of speech and as a matter of fact, I encourage as well as promote it in words and deeds, but my personal experience and I am sure all of us here have experienced in traveling here and abroad that, people in the tourism industry give you a balanced perspective and fair representation about their region, their country and their continent.

So let us chat and converse with our visitors about everything and those representations should be fair to all of us because others will not have a right to reply. Here I am talking about people who will be talking down their employers, talk bad about social and environmental concerns in the region, as well as talking down about Political, business, sport and civil society leadership of our region, and our country.

**In conclusion,** Sedibeng District Municipality has and will provide all the support to all the Tourism establishments in the District, in line with our IDP deliverables, which we hold very highly. I wish all the participants well

and hope that we will find this event well worth your while. If wishes were horses, and I had my way, you would all be winners.

This is a beginning of bigger things to come into our District and we have plans to host this event every year depending on the level of excitement this will draw out from industry players and the support especially nominees, entries and of course sponsorship who are our critical partners.

At this point I would like to thank the following sponsors and thank you very much for your continued support and generous giving each time we ask your hand in strategic and important partnerships.

1. Riverside Hotel & Conference Centre - venue & decor
2. Riviera on Vaal - decor, diskidancers & MC
3. Emerald Resort - sound equipment
4. Balloon Mania - balloon & football display
5. Bee Wise Exclusive Flowering & Functions – Décor
6. Meise Nkaiseng Attorneys Notaries & Conveyancers - gumboot dancers & drummer
7. Sedgars - Football hamper;
8. Barnyard Vereeniging - memory sticks for the press
9. Tattoo Band they sponsored themselves as a band as part of the entertainment
10. Sedgars and Sedibeng sponsored the sports hamper

**I thank you**