



Vote of Thanks by the Sedibeng District Municipality Executive Mayor, Cllr Mahole Simon Mofokeng on the occasion of the Constitution Signing Celebration held on the 03rd December 2010, in Sedibeng

Programme Director:

Mr Leon Wessels;

The Sharpeville Heritage Group Representatives;

Our Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Setjhaba sa Sedibeng;

Programme Director, this historic event comes at the time when we have just left this area with our report back public meeting on our 100 Days Service Delivery Projects.

This we were doing in pursuit of our Growth & Development Strategy, our commitment to renewing our communities, when I during the commemoration of the Human Rights Day on 21 March 2010, launched

and announced this Programme of various developmental projects throughout the District Municipality.

These projects as identified were to be started within the 100 days from 21 March 2010. The idea and intention was to ensure that some of these projects have been started, some would have been midway to completion while some would have been completed during this 100 Days period.

Critical to the programme, was the development of the Sedibeng area and the involvement of local residents in the implementation of the projects.

I stand here in front you proud to report that all the projects are progressing well.

Dear people of Sedibeng and our guests, I take this opportunity to bring you the warm greetings from **Sedibeng District Municipality**. Together with the entire world, the world looked in relief on this day 14 years ago when the then South African President, Honourable Doctor Nelson Mandela signed the Constitution into law here in Sharpeville.

The world had a vision of bloodletting on a grand scale for the resolution of the South African conflict. It was not to be, and the whole world was to be served with the best Constitution in the whole world if I have to say so.

The fact that one of our own sons here in the Sedibeng District, Senior Council Advocate Ishmael Semenya spent sleepless nights with Mr. Roelf Meyer and Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa is not lost on us. Why did they sign the Constitution here in Sharpeville and not Soweto or Liliesfarm?

The Political Epoch

Historical transactions do not normally happen in a vacuum. The questions that are often not asked have a tendency of providing very profound answers. The question that we as a Nation forgot to ask about Sharpeville, will serve to assist us in understanding the nature and magnitude of the signing of the Constitution here in Sedibeng.

Our communities here in Sedibeng, played a crucial role in the politics of this country and the resolutions of very critical questions at critical times of our struggle. Sharpeville has had its share of these.

It was at the time when what was to become the last petition and what was hoped to be a peaceful march by the ANC against the obligatory carrying of Dompasses for Africans.

The community of Sharpeville stood up as one to support this call. The question is, "Why did the community of a small township like Sharpeville, which at the time had less than two thousand households, as opposed to

Soweto and Alexandra townships, which were well developed at the time, rise up in the manner that they did?

The answer to the question is quiet simple, **Forced Removals**. In 1959, the entire community of Top Location, the township which was flash bang on the bank of the Vaal River, was forcibly removed from their area to allow for the expansion of Vereeniging town.

The community was removed from a very lush and fertile area. We do not have to imagine the prospects of a township that has river frontage. We simply have to look at the price of properties that have access to the river.

When the call for the Anti-Pass Campaign was made at the time the community of Sharpeville, still burning from the forced removals from Top Location, with enduring and remaining feelings of discontent, believing that they at last had an avenue to vent out their frustrations at the brutality and cruelty of the apartheid system, rose up to the plate.

The community, young and old, fit and fickle, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, all shapes and sizes in all colours of blue and hue, stood up in one voice to say ***“Enough is Enough”***.

The number of those dead after the first salvo is now a historical fact. The number of the injured was minimized to avoid continued harassment.

The Sharpeville Effect

The accuracy is neither here nor there, suffice it to mention that the aftermath of Sharpeville led to the banning of both the ANC and the PAC. Our movement the ANC went underground. The time for sending petitions to the then apartheid Regime and the British Empire was over.

The time for serious engagement with the enemy matured and had grown. The beginning of the Epoch of the Armed Struggle was upon us. For that, we the community of Sedibeng in particular and the Nation in general, are very proud. The world as whole was to know and take resolutions that declared apartheid a heresy.

It is well documented history that when the entire African communities of South Africa were pushed into submission after the 1976 Soweto Uprisings, it took the rise of Sharpeville and Sedibeng townships as a whole to raise the consciousness of the whole nation to realize that we could bring down apartheid.

Through the rent boycotts and the many consumer boycotts, the whole country arose in unison to say, ***“yes it can be done.”***

It is now history that Sedibeng was declared to be “The Cradle of Human Rights Struggles of South Africa”. The fact that the Constitution was

signed here in Sharpeville implies that the South African Constitutional Square is here. This is not lost on us as the Municipality.

We are hard at work as you can see to ensure that this precinct with the Constitutional Walk is a fitting tribute to our history and contribution as a Region to the liberation of South Africa.

This Constitutional Walk, a fitting tribute to our rich history and heritage, together with the Sharpeville Hall will be completed by the time we celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the signing of the Constitution next year.

I take this opportunity to thank the organizers of this celebration, our partners the Sharpeville Heritage Group for a job well done. I thank our guests, the community of Sedibeng and Gauteng Province who made a trip to mark this historic occasion.

The people of Sharpeville ke le rolela katiba. Sedibeng appreciates and South Africa is a better place today because of you all.

I Thank You