

Address by Executive Mayor of the Sedibeng District Municipality: Cllr Mahole Simon Mofokeng on the occasion of the Sedibeng District-Wide Mayoral Committees Lekgotla held in Parys, Free State on the 4th & 5th March 2014.

- Executive Mayor of the Emfuleni Local Municipality: Executive Mayor: Cllr. Greta Hlongwane.
- Executive Mayor of the Midvaal Local Municipality: Cllr. Bongani Baloyi, we welcome you as this is your first attendance to this our first District Wide Lekgotla since your election as the Executive Mayor of the Midvaal Local Municipality and on the same score, we wish the former Executive Mayor: Mr. Timothy Nast well in his new career.
- Executive Mayor of the Lesedi Local Municipality: Cllr. Lerato Maloka
- Members of Mayoral Committees present,
- Our Speakers, Chief Whips and Fellow Councilors,
- MMs & Senior Managers present,
- Representatives from the Gauteng Department of Corporative Governance & Traditional Affairs

Colleagues, we meet here today during the period when our country is celebrating the 20 years of achievements since the dawn of democracy in 1994.

Our Lekgotla takes place today when we remember the Inaugural Conference of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), a non-racial trade union movement was held at the Trades Hall in Johannesburg on the 4th & 5th March 1955,.

During this period, we further remember the 4th March, 1963, when the former secretary-general of the African National Congress (ANC), Walter Sisulu, was convicted of having incited a stay-at-home of African workers in protest of the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act of 1961.

While I am at this point, I am tempted to share with and remind you of the 343 political prisoners on Robben Island who went on a hunger strike on the 4th March 1990 demanding their release in order to strengthen the bargaining positions of the ANC during Talks about Talks.

As we meet today during these anniversaries of this important development in the history of our Country, the political climate has changed dramatically from what it used to be then. Indeed, South Africa today is a better place to live in.

Our proposed theme for this Lekgotla, “Planning together to move towards the Vaal River Metropolitan Municipality” could not have come at the right time. The period under review calls on us to do exactly that. As we come to the 20th Anniversary of our Democracy, we cannot afford to leave things to chance.

Planning together for the next twelve years, allows us to take stock of our Sedibeng Growth and Development Strategy.

This will greatly enhance the attainment of a Better Life for All. Collectively, we have impacted positively in the lives of our people in the attainment of ten flagship projects which flow from our Growth and Development Strategy.

Taking the cue from the Hon. President Jacob Zuma, we also have a good story to tell. Sedibeng is a better place to live in today than it was twenty years ago. We are proud of the good work which all our Municipalities have been doing since our last Lekgotla in their efforts to Better the lives of all our people.

The following are some of the milestones in the good story of our Region to tell:

- Our Zone of Opportunity in Lesedi continues to grow rapidly such that today we have a Regional Mall under construction and many other developments already approved and are about to take off.
- In the Midvaal area, the R59 Corridor continues draw much needed foreign direct investment into our Region at an alarming rate. The multi-billion rand Savannah City Mixed Housing Development has just taken off the ground and many others still to follow.
- While in the Emfuleni are, the Industrial sites which were left empty during the mid-eighties are beginning to fill up with new industrial entrants, with the R42 Corridor becoming the new magnet for new investments in the Region. The investor confidence has improved so much that the existing Retail business is expanding and new developments are growing in the township.

All these developments served to create long-term sustainable jobs in the Region, making the lives of our people much better and Sedibeng a better place to live in than it was before.

THE ROAD TO THE METRO

During the interim to the final phase of Local Government in South Africa, we spoke no treason, we sought to neither incite nor provoke anyone when we said: Our Region is a single, united and indivisible whole, deserving of a being a Metropolis.

In the period following the 2009 National and Provincial Elections, the question was posed to all Executive Mayors here in Sedibeng by the then MMC of Local Government: What will constitute the single driving force and policy direction for the Sedibeng Region in the next five years?

Without any doubt or hesitation, we all answered: **Consolidation of government will be our clarion call for the foreseeable future.** From that day onwards, we were driven and pulled forward by this vision. In 2010, leading up 2011, we strove to make this consolidation a reality.

Our 2010 FIFA World Cup offering, with all of us making a joint and seamless offering and effort, gave the world and the Gauteng Provincial Government a taste of things to come.

Our communities warmed up to the idea of a single port of service, seamless service delivery and were witnesses to great synergy from the four Municipalities working together for the greater good of all, and they loved it and lapped it.

Collectively, we drew from this energy and developed the concept of a Sedibeng Regional Authority.

This in our own way was an expression of a will to bring together, four Municipalities under one umbrella, with an express intention of bringing together our people who were separated by artificial boundaries, both legislative and geographical.

This notion of a Regional Authority, at best spoke about the creation of one big stand-alone single tier **Category B Municipality by 2016**, which did not find expression in the Constitution.

Our best hope was that in the creation of such an Institution, we would canvass Constitutional support for it as we went along. In our own way, collectively, we pulled and planned together, set into motion the greatest **IGR** thrust and onslaught, culminating in the various ground-breaking Makgotla here in the Region.

By Heraclitus' assertion, everything is in a constant state of change and flux, but such a change and motion involves contradictions and can only take place through contradictions. Flowing from this assertion, all of us maintained that indeed the change was necessary, that the two-tier system was unworkable and inefficient.

However, some amongst us believed that it can only be done through the disestablishment of the District Municipality. In this manner, the belief was that each of the local Municipality would constitute a lower single tier entity independent of all the others in the same Region. This became the first lesson of the contradictions referred to by Heraclitus.

The second contradiction came in the form of transformation of quantity into quality through the passage of time. The declaration by the MDB on the 15th of October 2013 to merge the Sedibeng District, Emfuleni and Midvaal Local Municipalities, into a single entity, with the incorporation of Lesedi Local Municipality into Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality gives a full expression to the second contradiction of transforming quantity into quality.

This will therefore translate into the provision of an efficient, effective and economic service delivery to our people and further take our Region forward.

The road to the Metro was indeed not an easy one.

I may not be able to put it better than John Scully, the author when he says and I quote: **“The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious.”** The pronouncement of the **Municipal Demarcation Board** is a full expression of the future we envisioned a long time ago.

This future belongs to the communities of Sedibeng. **The Vaal River Metropolitan Municipality** is theirs to enjoy, achieved a full five years before the target we had set for ourselves.

We did it and our communities appreciate. In our various Makgotla, we initially set our target to become the Vaal River Metropolitan Municipality for 2021. We sat down, we planned and we prepared. At the most, we had expected to become a **Category B Municipality** by 2016.

We took our plans to our communities and they adopted them as their own. The quest to become a Metro assumed a life of its own in the hearts and minds of our people. It is done.

On the 15th of October, we cheered to the news: **Gauteng Province will have a new Metropolitan Council, the proposed merger of Sedibeng District, Emfuleni Local Municipality and Midvaal to form the new Metro has been approved by the Municipal Demarcation Board**”

This announcement saw communities in Sharpeville, Sebokeng, Ratanda, Sicelo, Piel’s Farm, Evaton and many others here in the Region spilling into the streets in jubilation. They sang, danced and cried tears of joy. This was because after all our collective efforts and hard work, their prayers were answered.

THANK YOU DEMOCRACY MARCH

Colleagues, for the first time in the history of this country, we had a service delivery march of a kind. The communities marched on my Office to thank the collective effort of Sedibeng and our constituent local Municipalities in bringing our Constitution to life by making us one. This is indeed a good story to tell.

On our part, as the representatives of our people and servants of our communities, we were vindicated. Our Region will now be accorded the respect it was denied. We will take our rightful place in the competitive **global Gauteng City** Region as an equal to those who were accorded this status before us.

Esteemed Colleagues

We have a good story to tell.

Our collective role in influencing the determination by the Municipal Demarcation Board has greatly influenced their decision and this decision did not come as a shock to us. One needs only to look at our actions, they are people centered actions, diverse in their beliefs and convictions, yet acting as one through unity of purpose.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE FOR THE MDB TO MAKE THIS DETERMINATION?

We acted together as one in the last three years, marching to the same beat, to influence this outcome. We may disagree to agree on this one, but allow me to briefly take you through the journey we have collectively travelled to this end.

Councillor Baloyi, you will recall that we collectively undertook study tours to both **Buffalo City** on the 07th September 2011. Hot on the heels of this visit, we followed up with another study tour to **Mangaung Metropolitan Council** on the 27th September 2011.

During these tours, we came out with one realization, namely that Sedibeng Region, with all our Municipalities, were much closer to becoming a Metropolitan Council than the two Metros we visited.

We had much fewer challenges on the road to the Metro than they had while they had become new Metros. We were better placed to become a Metro then, than the two Municipalities we visited were with their new found Metro Status.

Today in Sedibeng, we are talking about preparation for the day one come 2016. And come day one of the new Vaal River Metropolitan Municipality, we will have a plan, systems in place, and well placed to operate as a Metropolitan Council.

We then went to Kievietskroon in October 2011. At the Kievietskroon Lekgotla, together with Midvaal, Lesedi and Emfuleni, we all found our way in bringing about uniformity in the development of the **Second Generation Sedibeng Growth and Development Strategy**.

We came out with a clear-cut programme on the path we all have to take for the well-being of our communities.

Among these programmes:

- We reaffirmed our Seven Key Deliverables, which are the 5 Rs plus two as still being relevant, and
- We also agreed that for the success of our commitments, we resolved on ten flagship projects,

This clear cut programme was taken forward at the tail-end of the year 2011, in November, when we converged at the Emerald Resorts and Casino with our stakeholders for the **Second Generation Sedibeng Growth and Development Summit** where it was adopted.

As if that was not enough, we later in 2012 met at the **Khaya-Bhubesi** to streamline our IDPs. In doing so, we gave expression to our vision and the Second Generation Sedibeng Growth and Development Strategy.

At this Lekgotla, we developed and assigned projects and programmes which would assure the developmental growth of our Region. Early last year, we met again in Midrand on the 14th of March to find alignment and synergy of our IDPs and the Sedibeng Growth and Development Strategy.

We knew what we were saying at that time when we said to the former Minister Richard Baloyi, “We have our ducks in the row”. It is only now we hope our people will begin to see what we meant at the time.

Without any doubt or fear of contradictions, this synergy was there for all to see. Our IDPs are aligned; the synergy is there with the **Sedibeng Growth and Development Strategy, the Gauteng Vision 2055 and the National Development Plan.**

THE SMART CITY

We committed ourselves to building Sedibeng into a **Smart City**. In bringing this vision to life, collectively we embarked on other study tours. Together with the leadership of **Midvaal, Emfuleni and Lesedi**, we went to **Dubai and India** to learn more about **Smart Cities**. This Study Tour gave us a sense of the Smart City we hope to have here in Sedibeng.

I want to repeat, I speak no treason and hope not to be burned on the stake, when I say:

All of us, without fail or contradictions, committed part of our limited resources towards Smart City. Sedibeng District continues to lay the optic fibre backbone, and our local Municipalities followed through in enhancing internal connectivity.

The Emfuleni Local Municipality on their part has begun with the Smart Metering, Multi-Media Messaging System (MMS) and other Smart initiatives. Midvaal Local Municipality was not to be left behind. On their part, they have linked up their broadband connectivity to enhance learning through libraries and schools.

Trenches are being dug throughout the Region as we speak. The system was put through its paces during the **State of the District Address last year** and it came through with distinctions.

Our actions spoke louder than our words. We sang for the same hymn book and the same verse. This we did without resorting to the public arena. Like members of the same Sedibeng Family, we kept our commitment to ourselves.

The **Municipal Demarcation Board** saw and felt this commitment despite our public posturing to the contrary. They could not deny the communities of Sedibeng what they deserved. The **Municipal Demarcation Board** could not, in the face of overwhelming evidence, most of which was provided by our collective actions here, come to any other decision except to pronounce for the merger.

IDPS AND BUDGETS ALIGNMENT

We are meeting here today at Khaya Bhubesi, where we met three years ago. The last time we were here, three years ago, we were still hoping that by 2016 we will in all probability have a Category B Municipality in the Region.

However, developments have exceeded our expectations, today we are here not only to align but to bring closer our IDPs in anticipation of the Vaal River Metropolitan Municipality. It is our understanding that the first step moving forward, will amongst others, relate to working from the same template in the development of our IDPs.

Our efforts, in the alignment of our IDPs, based on the overarching Sedibeng Growth and Development Strategy, organically linked to the National Development Plan has led us to where we are today.

I must say that the convening of this august body, the District Wide Mayoral Committees Lekgotla, a very critical IGR body is a process in the right direction. In this manner, we are better placed to begin our planning for the desired future in earnest.

The second step, which is the core business of our Lekgotla calls on us to co-ordinate all the IDPs of the three Municipalities, namely, Sedibeng District Municipality, Emfuleni Local Municipality and the Midvaal Local Municipality. Lesedi Local Municipality on the other hand needs to be planning for their migration to the Ekurhuleni.

The next 2 IDPs for the three Municipalities must be viewed as convergence IDPs. The 2014-15 IDP and the 2015-16 IDPs, must set the tone for the Metropolitan Council IDP 2016-17.

Critical arrears which needs to be considered in the co-ordination and convergence of our IDPs includes amongst other, the adoption of a common District based Spatial Development Framework. This would form the basis for common planning which in itself will greatly enhance our attainment of Reintegrating our Region and reversing the apartheid geography.

I have no doubt that a consolidated and single Regional Spatial Development Framework will find a way to deal with these issues. I have no doubt that the Framework will give expression to a more livable and encourage greater social integration and safe Region in order to make,

Just as important as the Spatial Development Framework is, so will the Assets Management Plan and Financial Planning be. We would not want to have a situation where assets which

served the three municipalities diligently in the run up to the Metro, disappearing suddenly and we arrive at the Vaal River Metropolitan Municipality without a single vehicle or a single desktop.

Equally important as the other aspects above, the need for independent budgets aligned to the consolidated IDP cannot be overemphasized. In this manner we will be better placed to provide service delivery to our communities. This will be supported by such aspects as the tariff harmonization, central approval of long term commitments, reserves and Chart of Accounts, amongst others.

The recipe for success is there for all to see. Our communities have seen, felt it and called for the single tier of government here in our Region. Let us now deliver on this mandate as we have delivered on bringing about a determination for a Vaal River Metropolitan Municipality five years before the target date.

The theme for this Sedibeng District Wide Mayoral Committee Lekgotla calls us to action: **Planning together to move towards the Vaal River Metropolitan Municipality.** This not only resonates well with the national thrust to move South Africa forward, it also gives expression to the unity of purpose, acting in tandem with our communities, servants of the people, the government to move our country forward.

In moving towards a Metropolitan Municipality here in the Region, we will indeed have moved our people, our communities forward. What then is demanded of us? How do we move forward? What will it take to plan forward?

THE TRANSITIONAL PROCESS

The MEC has released the Section 14.5 draft notice which calls for comments from all affected Municipalities. Whilst the draft was referring to Emfuleni Local Municipalities as our anchor for our new Metro, erroneously creating an impression that coordination will also rest with them, whilst legislation clearly stipulates that the District Municipality should continue to play coordination role even during the transition period. I am going to talk on this matter in detail later during my Power-point presentation.

CONCLUSION

This Lekgotla is critical in that the Midvaal Local Municipality must take keen interest in what the Emfuleni Local Municipality's plans entails and vice versa, as this is going to assist in ensuring collective planning and strengthening IGR going forward. And the Lesedi Local Municipality must start to take keen interest in what is happening in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality to ensure smooth incorporation without necessarily losing sight of what is happening in Sedibeng.

We must continue to encourage all political parties contesting elections in our Region to work towards ensuring smooth, free and fair elections. We must denounce any form of intolerance during this period and work together in calling for all registered voters to go out in numbers to make their historic mark on the 7th May, the elections day.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations during this important Lekgotla.

Thank you!