

ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO MR. CHUPU MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE SALGA LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL MEMBERS ASSEMBLY, BELA-BELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, FOREVER RESORTS – WARMBATHS.

20 NOVEMBER 2019

Programme Facilitator;  
SALGA Provincial Chairperson, Cllr Pule Shai;  
SALGA NEC representatives;  
MEC for CoGHSTA, Ntate Bioskop Makamu;  
Chairperson of the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders, Kgoshi Malesela Dikgale;  
Executive Mayor of the Waterberg District Municipality, Cllr Mories Mataboge;  
Executive Mayors and Mayors present here today,  
Acting SALGA Provincial Executive Office, Mme Ledile Molope;  
Esteemed delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great privilege for me to address this important gathering of the South African Local Government Association in our Province.

I want to thank the SALGA Provincial Executive for your generous invitation to this important meeting of role players in the local government space.

As you know, your organisation, SALGA, is an important body with strategic legislative mandate to represent, promote and protect the interests of local governments throughout the country.

SALGA is a truly unique entity which has no counterpart in the local government space.

Perhaps before I could go any further, I should take this opportunity to congratulate, the Executive Mayor of Polokwane, Cllr Thembi Nkadimeng, who is also the National President of SALGA, for her recent confirmation as Co-President of the United Cities and Local Government.

Congratulations Madam President.

We are confident that you will represent Limpopo and the country with diligence and outmost distinction at an international level.

I think the best support you can advance to Cllr Nkadimeng is for you as SALGA

Limpopo to support the building of strong and resilient municipalities throughout the Province.

Through your support role, we can ensure that municipalities in Limpopo become centres of service delivery excellence.

Municipalities in Limpopo can and must be assisted to play a crucial developmental role in our communities.

Through your support, our municipalities can and must be at the centre of local economic development.

Every square inch in this country is a particular municipal territory.

This means that every development that is to take place in this country, takes place in a municipal territory.

It is therefore an anomaly that municipalities will not be at the forefront of any development taking place in this Province and in this Country.

We need to reposition our municipalities to reclaim their inherent position in our development trajectory.

Municipalities cannot afford to be on the sidelines and just admire development taking place in their space.

You need to reclaim your position in this regard.

Programme Director;

Your meeting takes place under a clarion call that says 'inspiring coordinated municipal support'.

The theme adequately summarises what SALGA is about.

The very existence of SALGA is about coordination and support to municipalities across the country.

In the case of SALGA Limpopo, your strategic mandate is to ensure a coordinated support to municipalities within the Province.

The adoption of this theme, therefore suggest a commitment to live up to your constitutional and legislative mandate.

I take it that the thinking behind this theme is that by ensuring a coordinated support to municipalities, you will be helping to ensure that municipalities are able to discharge their functions effectively and efficiently.

Taking advantage of this theme, I want to plead with delegates that they should make time and respond to some of the questions which I consider relevant today as they were relevant yesterday;

- You should make an honest assessment of the advances made in terms of meeting the basic needs of our people;

- You should respond to the question whether you have adequately managed to democratise the institution of local government; and,

- Whether you have done enough to transform the local government into effective and efficient machinery for service delivery.

These questions are relevant because as an association of municipalities, you carry the mandate to ensure that municipalities take basic services to the people.

We must always ensure that the local government space is democratised, allowing the voices of our people to guide development in their own communities.

It is also your responsibility as SALGA to ensure that our municipalities are well-oiled machines for effective and efficient delivery of services to our communities.

We rely on SALGA to ensure that municipalities contribute to the efforts of furthering Africa's integration and development.

Programme Director;

We cannot over emphasise the significance of this Provincial Assembly.

For us this Assembly should be about powering the institution of local government in our province to be accountable, responsive, with the necessary capacity to speed up the delivery of services to our people.

This meeting should therefore come with strategies to assist our municipalities to overcome some of the following challenges:

- §The challenge of poor accountability and relationship with communities

- §Problems with the political administrative interface

- §Poor compliance with the legislative and regulatory frameworks

- §Corruption and fraud

- §Lack of proper planning and poor project management,

- §Lack of forward and integrated planning on current and capital projects,

- §At times lack of suitably qualified and skilled personnel and, above all,

- §None and under-expenditure of the Municipal Infrastructure Grant.

All these challenges deserves our immediate attention and action, however, we need much tenacity when it comes to the issue of inability to spend on conditional infrastructure grants.

The issue of MIG has been a problem for most of our municipalities.

This meeting would have betrayed its purpose if it can't sufficiently deal with this matter.

Whatever the problems are, there should be a solution, and that solution should be found in this meeting.

This point is related to the issue of those municipalities which are classified as dysfunctional.

I think it is a very serious indictment on all of us that we should have even a single municipality classified as dysfunctional.

It is even a serious indictment on Mayors and councillors who preside over such municipalities.

As you know, dysfunctionality in most municipalities is as a result of poor governance, political instability; poor audit outcomes, high vacancy rate at senior management level, and poor spending on MIG.

Our Back-to-Basics Programme was aimed specifically at addressing some of these challenges.

The question we have to answer in this meeting is why some municipalities are falling to respond to this prescription.

What is it that we need to do in order to rescue these municipalities from total collapse?

Again, this meeting should provide answers.

We should also use this meeting to find answers to the issue of regressing municipal audit outcomes –it can't be business as usual.

In his latest MFMA audit report, the AG report painted a picture of slight improvement in the overall audit outcomes.

However, the AG went further to note that the improvements are mainly consultant driven which is not a sustainable trend.

The AG went further to categorise the provincial audit outcomes into the following three classes:

ü Complacent auditees consistently receiving unqualified opinions with findings, without any improvement in internal controls to address shortcomings in the areas of performance reporting and compliance.

These municipalities lacked the will to move to a clean audit status

ü Underperformance that continue to receive qualified outcomes because of their failure to deal with repeat qualifications, and

ü Consistent poor performers with high level of transgressions and no consequences.

In simple terms, the Auditor General says that there is no motivation to do things the right way.

He goes further to say that there are no consequences for doing things the wrong way.

We will be putting more pressure on SALGA and various councils to ensure that those who are not prepared to do things the right way give way to those who will do the right things.

We must also address some of the following observations by the AG;

- ü The high levels of irregular expenditure;
- ü The poor quality of submitted financial statements;
- ü Higher levels of non-compliance with governance laws;
- ü Delays in submitting annual reports to councils
- ü The failure to investigate findings, and
- ü The failure to take action on findings

Programme Director;

SALGA also has an inherent obligation to assist in the efforts to strengthening the capacity of our municipalities.

The development we are all talking about is largely dependent on the capacities of our municipalities to drive such a development.

Municipalities are, and should remain our strategic engines of development.

All countries which have improved on their development trajectory have done so with trough local government.

This is because all development projects and initiatives, takes place at a local level.

There is no development that is taking place at national or provincial level.

You all know about our SEZ initiative which is taking place in municipalities of Musina, Makhado and Fetakgomo/Tubatse.

You would also know that such a massive development project is taking place in the space of local government.

As you know, this SEZ initiative is expected to revitalize Limpopo's industrial economy by utilising our local mineral resources and integrating the industrial chains of both the upstream and downstream.

Several plants will be constructed under this SEZ projects.

I must also say that this project is expected to create no less than 28 000 jobs for the people of this Province.

You can already see the massive role that the concerned municipalities are expected to play in this regard.

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I am aware that your programme is congested and you have a hectic day ahead.

I want to conclude my few remarks by once again wishing your Assembly progressive and fruitful deliberations.

I am confident that this Assembly will be able to deal with its business to the fullest.

Amongst others, we are confident that you will be able to give sufficient attention to issues that emanates from your last conference, and;

We hope that you will be able to do justice to the task of adopting the Programme of Action, the Business Plan and the budget, as you intend to do;

We wish you a successful assembly and we look forward to interacting with your resolutions.

I thank you!

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