

OPENING REMARKS BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF MATJHABENG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, ME MATHABO MOKAPO ON THE OCCASION OF A WORKSHOP OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES ON 20 OCTOBER 2006 IN WELKOM

Programme Director
Members of the Mayoral Committee
MMC for Community Services - Lejweleputswa District Council
Ward Councillors
Management of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
Management of the Department of Correctional Services
Ward Committee Members and Community Development Workers

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all the organizers of this important forum that will be deliberating on such crucial matters which are a cornerstone of development in this current epoch.

The significance of issues that relate to the environment need to be always in the mainstream of our planning around any development. The emergence of the green movement throughout the globe has ensured that all development that takes place at national, provincial and local spheres takes cognizance of the environmental dimension that is associated with any development.

Issues that relate to the environment in our epoch constitute the bedrock on which sustainable development can be realized.

As a country we form part of the family of nations that embrace the Millennium Development Goals. And for that reason we need at the local level, to ensure that initiatives, programmes and projects that will lead to an aesthetic environment are embraced.

I hope we all recall that our country, in 2002 hosted the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which took very important decisions around environmental issues, building on the decisions taken at Rio in 1992. Because we were part of those resolutions and decisions, we must ensure that at our level we translate what was deliberated in the summit to reality.

Our planet in this conjuncture continues to face the most serious problems, which is environmental degradation coupled with problems around pollution, global warming, ozone depletion and general depletion of those natural resources that are important for our survival.

Further, because of our apartheid past and the legacy of colonialism, issues relating to the environment were always a domain of an elite, hence the skewed nature of development around our environment.

The challenges enunciated above call upon all levels of government, civil society and all broad formations to engage in serious efforts around environmental education and awareness so as to tackle the many predicaments we face as a society.

I sincerely hope that this forum will engage with the necessary vigor and assertiveness on the issues pertaining to the “Know How Strategy”. We must ensure that programmes that were planned and initiated become a reality so that we redress all the imbalances of our past.

I once more wish to commend the organizers for having widened the net in the scope of this forum, for I realize that all the key stakeholders are on board, and this augurs very well for the quality of discussions and debates we shall have here today. To me this demonstrates the importance of what our President, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, always emphasizes i.e. importance of partnerships and an integrated approach to our work as we engage in social transformation.

On this note, I wish all the participants good luck in their deliberations and hope that this forum will emerge with viable programmes, strategies and tactics that will result in Matjhabeng become a model environmental destiny.

Thank you.

**COUNCILLOR MATHABO MOKAPO
EXECUTIVE MAYOR**