

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR M.N MOKOENA, MPL, DURING A DEBATE ON AFRICA DAY AT THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE, RIVERSIDE, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.**

**Tuesday, 24 May 2011**

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members;

Given this year's theme for Africa Day - "*Africa and the Diaspora*," African countries are called upon to focus primarily on challenges facing their daily lives. It is a call that we must continue to unite and fight conflict, poverty, diseases such as HIV and Aids and infant mortality, amongst others. As African people, we acknowledge that conflicts have dispersed us all over our mother continent - Africa, but we must stay united and focussed on addressing the challenges we are collectively facing. One of the greatest challenges of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which poses serious threats to us is the advent of climate change. It poses the risk to increased diseases, food security, people being displaced due to rising sea levels, and even to our own existence as the human species.

Honourable Members, Africa Day, which is celebrated under the banner of the African Union annually on May 25, by the 53 member states including South Africa, continues to highlight the challenges we are collectively facing.

When addressing a public meeting organised by the South African Congress of Democrats in Johannesburg in 1958, during the dark days of apartheid, one of our liberation stalwarts, *Inkosi* Albert John Mvumbi Luthuli said and I quote:

*"The difficulties may be great, but nothing has beaten man if he has striven. ....There is a challenge which you and I must meet. We cannot dodge it. I cannot believe that all of us, who are here will fail South Africa - because we are cowards and apathetic. I believe we all will do our best - whatever the difficulties are. ....Go forward in faith and believe in the sanity of posterity."*

This motivation therefore, encourages us to work together for the prosperity of Africa. We continue to be encouraged and motivated to make everything in our power, to ensure that hunger becomes a thing of the past in Africa. We have a challenge of water shortage in our country and Africa at large; hence we must work together to save this rare human right commodity. A large number of our people continue to walk long distances to fetch water, and in most instances the water is not purified, hence our government continues to prioritise the provision of safe and clean water at a doorstep.

Honourable Speaker, the commitment made by the ruling African National Congress in the 2009 National Election Manifesto, is to ensure **“A Better Africa and a Better World.”** The ANC believes **“that economic and political cooperation with other countries can improve the lives of our own people and will continue to work towards a better life for all, a better Africa and a better world, without hunger, disease, conflict and underdevelopment.”**

As the government of the day, we commit to **“Work together with people of our continent and the Diaspora for cohesion, unity, democracy and prosperity of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and African Union, and strengthening our capabilities to respond to the challenges we face.”**

As Africans, we must therefore continue to pray for peace and stability in our continent. This is a prerequisite condition for Africa’s development and prosperity, which continues to underpin our country’s democracy.

Honourable Members, as we celebrate Africa Day tomorrow, let us do so as one people united in our diversity. Despite our different languages, religion and culture, we are one people and should remain a united force.

As South Africans and the people of Mpumalanga, we denounce any form of xenophobia. We remain welcoming people, who understand that *motho ke motho, ka batho – umuntu ngumuntu, ngabantu!* We understand that without each other; without peace; without co-existence, Africa's development would be at stake.

In closing, tat' uNelson Mandela once said and I quote:

*"I dream of an Africa which is in peace with itself."*

Achieving peace and prosperity for Africa, is in our hands.

Happy Africa Day for tomorrow!

*I thank you!*