

**CLOSING REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIROMENT AND TOURISM, MR NORMAN MOKOENA, MPL, DURING THE DEPARTMENTAL STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT AT FLOREAT RIVERSIDE LODGE IN SABIE, EHLANZENI DISTRICT**

**Saturday, 12 February 2011**

*Good Afternoon!*

When President Jacob Zuma delivered the State of the Nation Address last night, he said, and I quote:

*“.....We are concerned that unemployment and poverty persist despite the economic growth experienced in the past 10 years. To address these concerns, we have declared 2011 a year of job creation through meaningful economic transformation and inclusive growth. We have introduced a New Growth Path that will guide our work in achieving these goals, working within the premise that the creation of decent work, is at the centre of our economic policies.”*

Emanating from that statement, you'll all agree that our intention of meeting here over the last three (3) days was to assess whether our current business plan, that is, the strategic and annual performance plans, are talking to the policy directives of the ruling party, as alluded to by the President. Together with our three (3) implementing agencies, MEGA, MTPA and MGB, we had to check, re-align ourselves, and even re-configure our operations in order to perform better.

Our task was to check whether our current business plan is talking to the Outcome-based approach and the proposed Provincial New Growth Path.

The question is whether our **Current Vision and Mission** are addressing the outcome-based approach in relation to our mandates as per Outcomes 4 and 10 and the new Provincial Growth Path?

We've also realised that our current **strategic goal** is not talking to the approach our government is taking, hence it is imperative that we must revise it to be in line with the Outcome-based approach and the new Provincial Growth Path.

Given the new direction and approach, we must also assess our current muscle to deliver – whether the current **organisational structure** will assist us to deliver on our revised mandate. We will need to consider re-configuring and re-aligning our operations, including public entities, and also to check whether we have the right people or capacity.

We have a responsibility to future generations. This means that in our quest to create jobs and grow our economy we must remain mindful that without our greatest assets, which is our people and our planet, our growth will be short-lived.

Growth, if pursued in an unsustainable manner will ultimately erode our soils, diminish our plant and animal species, pollute our air and water and ultimately deprive us of the basics of life - We therefore need to strengthen our environmental enforcement and our impact management strategies.

Our actions should therefore remain people centred - When I say we must bring back *Batho-Pele*, we must not all be defensive and ask, **what do you mean**. Because we all know that I mean we must share information, provide redress, give value for money, and treat our clients, (which is our people) with dignity and respect.

We cannot lead and champion the crusade for decent jobs and inclusive growth, if we **work alone and in silos**. We will have to jerk-up our relations with our sister departments, and make the entities part of us, in all respects. We must share their successes and their failures, and be open to each other about how we treat and relate to each other.

We must also, define our space, our roles and our common responsibilities. The low-intensity rivalry between official in the departments and executives in the public entities must be halted. We need to reaffirm our roles and those of our public entities, and all agree that we will carry each of our roles, know that our vision is one, our responsibilities equal, and our accountability common. If we do not do this, we will continue to pull in different directions, and ultimately not achieve what we have set ourselves for.

Our public entities must remain aware that they carry their responsibilities in executing a mandate, and we as the department must know that for the entities to do what we need them to do – they need to know what we need them to do. We must carry them all along, without the bullishness of bureaucracy and technocracy. As long as we do not march in tandem, our resources will remain insufficient, and our plans disintegrate, thus limiting our successes.

Whilst we belabour our lack of funding and underfunding, we must first convince ourselves and the tax payer that the money we receive to do the things we want to do is used efficiently. As long as we receive qualified audits and fail to account, we dare not stand tall and say we need more. We must continue to say we need more to do more and do it better with more impact – but that we can only justify when our plans are intact , our targets are clear, and the impact is felt.

We must also develop the agility to react to opportunities, and act promptly. It serves no purpose to plan for ever, and let developments pass us by.

We need to stop talking and start acting. But we can only act when we are ready for these opportunities. It means that we must develop the capacity to detect new trends, and the machinery to exploit them.

In this instance, we must claim our fair share in various national developments and support systems - As Gauteng gets Gautrain, we must get Moloto Corridor, as Limpopo gets a Tertiary Hospital, we must get a University, as Durban hosts the next Conference of Parties on Climate Change, we must host the next Tourism Indaba (when it becomes available for bidding).

These opportunities remain at our finger-tips, and simply require forward planning, and the versatility to grab them.

We must also **learn from our mistakes, acknowledge them** and move forward, knowing that we will not repeat them. There is nothing as counter-productive as repeating the same mistake, and making it worse.

By this, I mean, we need to look into experiences like, the near-collapse of institutions like Zithabiseni, and say – never again. We must look at successes at MGB and say, always forever.

We must also individually introspect, ask ourselves difficult questions. We must ask ourselves, do we have the **appropriate skills and expertise to do our job**. But importantly we must answer, what will I do tomorrow to **learn more, read more, and inquire more** to enable me to **serve my people** and my country better.

Whilst we use consultants because of the work-load, it should be unacceptable to use consultants because we don't know anything.

**Skills development** in this department should be our second-nature, we must wake-up every day, eager to learn and discover – because it is only through learning, that we will be innovative. Our research output must be undoubtable , and our science only be questionable for perfection and not relevance.

We must make our province a tourist destination of first choice , and an investment paradise for corporates. To do this we must see our department like an embassy for this province, we should sell it , defend and market it.

**We must make it the best place to work, to invest, and to visit**

The work of MTPA and MEGA in this regard should be playing that ambassadorial role, with more resources, deployed where they make the highest impact. But to do these, entities should therefore be without blemish.

There should be clear **distinction between what we delegate our Public Entities to perform on our behalf, and what we do as a Department.** As a Department, we must give policy directives and set targets for our implementing agents. We cannot therefore be seen as competing with them. Our role should be monitor whether they are performing as expected. We should thus consider setting up a unit which will be our link with our Public Entities.

In this, we should not misconstrue it to mean that the department cannot initiate project and catalyse action. We need to know when to hand over our projects, and clearly delegate what our entities and development partners do with them.

## COMMERCIAL BREAK

As I close, on the political front, we welcome the latest developments in Egypt where the President has stepped down voluntarily. At the same time, I've been reliably advised that in this Departmental retreat, we've also had a fair share of what happened at Tahir Square in Cairo. I'm told Commission 2 did not want to be out-classed by these latest political developments. Unlike in Egypt, where the President surrendered power to a military council, in Commission 2, the Chairperson voluntarily surrendered power to commission members.

There was so much organised strategic chaos in this commission, before the transitional arrangement. At one stage, one prominent member of this commission, Mr Jerry Mafrika, a board member at MEGA, initiated his own parallel process and when he realised that he was not getting support from other commission members, he wanted to disown the process and the commission. He subsequently worked on his own in his own corner. However the membership of the commission rejected this and advised him accordingly, that they will protect the other commissions from him.

On the occasion of the commission reporting in plenary, the same member wanted, again, to pass a disclaimer on the report of the commission. Members advised him rigorously not to pursue the matter unilaterally, but at the end he was the first to commend that it was a good report.

I am also advised, that in plenary session before the presentation by the public entities, there was a heavy debate about accountability structures between the public entities and the department. At one stage, Mr Madoda Maseko and the Chairperson of the MTPA board, Mr Sabelo Mahlalela nearly had a physical confrontation on the matter. The HOD, in a very reconciliatory intervention, made two metaphoric statements and these will stay for a very long time to come.

Quoting the HOD, he said: *“Don’t throw stones when you leave in a glass house.”* I wonder who was throwing stones at who? Secondly, he said: *“Once the tail wags the dog violently like it does currently, it means the dog is not in charge.”* I wonder who’s the dog?