

CLOSING REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR M.N MOKOENA, MPL, DURING THE MPUMALANGA CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMIT HELD AT THE EHLANZENI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY OFFICE COMPLEX IN NELSPRUIT, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Friday, 07 October 2011

Programme Director, Ms Immi Serakalala;

Members of the Executive Council

Mayors and Councillors Present

The Head of Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Dr Vusanani Dlamini;

Other Heads of Departments present;

CEOs of our Public Entities;

Captains of Industry and Stakeholders from the private sector;

Officials from Provincial Departments, National Departments, and municipalities;

Non-government organisations;

Representatives of Civil Society

Members of the Media;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Afternoon!

The presentations and engagements over the last two days have confirmed that indeed time is short and that climate change summit is a defining challenge of our time, we can no longer postpone it for another day. This is the time to act, **Ke nako, Ixesha ngokhu, die tyd is om**, yisikhathi sokuthi umhlaba wonke jikelele ume ngenzinwayo ubhekane nesimo sezulu esithanda ukaba bucayi ngenxa yezizathu esezibekiwe yizikhulumu eziningi kusuka izolo.

The Executive Mayor of Mbombela Local Municipality, Cllr Cathy Dlamini as she was welcoming us was eloquent in articulating their passionate plea to the National Government to assist in mitigating the impact of climate change which is being felt by the Province already, especially on water security. We heartily thank her for giving us the freedom of the city which ends today.

The Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Mme Edna Molewa in just one hour, she gave us climatology one zero zero (100) to three zero zero (300) making us qualified climatologists and meteorologists who by the end of this summit can educate and explain climate change and its effects with authority to your next door neighbour using your own home language how his/her vegetable garden, mango or banana trees, sugar cane field, forestry plantation can be adversely affected by the impact of global warming.

How it will undermine the development and poverty eradication gains that we have made, and that we seek to achieve in the future if nothing is done now.

The Minister went on to explain in the user friendly language the position we seek to canvass not for you but together with you during COP17 in Durban.

The highlight of her presentation was the manner in which she explained the politics of climate change which seeks to put to the centre food and water security and the livelihoods of people in developing countries.

And more, importantly we were educated about the negotiations process from COP15, 16, 17 and beyond.

Surely, without a binding agreement on an international framework to enable and support the implementation of large scale mitigation and adaptation programmes at all levels in developing countries, the Kyoto protocol and millennium development targets will remain a farfetched dream. If we don't register progress in the implementation of these agreements, most certainly the poorest and most vulnerable will suffer most.

Through the Ministers presentation we are now aware that South Africa will go to COP17 in Durban with an open mind to seek convergence on even the most difficult issues. In other words, South Africa is ready, willing and able to influence and to be influenced by the nations of the world.

I heard over-arching messages from all the presenters from Mark Gordon, Our HOD Dr Vusanani Dlamini, Mr Moholwa, Dr Mlauli and Dr Motete that climate change threatens our economic viability, social development and that the current mitigation and adaptation efforts are inadequate.

Ladies and gentlemen;

We all agree that we must start ***Saving Tomorrow, Today*** but acting responsibly if we want to be counted as selfless pioneers of the environment. Like our children demonstrated over the last two (2) days of the summit, Climate Change *ifikele!* It is a reality – what is left for us to do, is to start coming up with ways to mitigate its impact.

However the first step that we must all take going forward, is commitment. We must collectively commit that we will contribute towards reducing our footprint on greenhouse gas emissions.

Bio-diversity Management

Our Bi-diversity is under serious threat due to Climate Change. As I indicated yesterday, we cannot continue to turn a blind eye when our only source of existence continues to be eroded. Our response in this regard will be in the form of a ***Bio-diversity Vulnerability Response Strategy***.

Provincial Climate Change Mitigation and Response Strategy

We believe that the inputs you presented over the past two days, will add value in shaping up our Provincial *Climate Change Mitigation and Response Strategy* which we are currently drafting.

School Awareness Programmes

In Sesotho they say, “*le ojoa le sa le metsi*,” hence we all agree that it is significant that we must start awareness around the impact of *Climate Change* at primary school level. Through our ***School Climate Change Literacy Programme***, we believe that we will lay a firm foundation to raise awareness on the negative consequences which *Climate Change* will bring about. We applaud the commitment made by the Executive Mayor of Mbombela, that they will take part in our *School Climate Change Literacy Programme*.

Health

Like the Minister indicated yesterday, we’ve started experiencing serious *Climate Change* whereby we can no longer differentiate between the seasons. In the past during this time of the year, we know that it would be very hot. However over the past two (2) days, we’ve experienced chilly weather conditions in the morning – something never heard off before in this part of our province.

Such changing weather conditions, as scientists predicts, may result in irregular rainy seasons which may lead to flooding; and flooding is always associated with the risk of diseases such as malaria, which will threaten our health status.

Food Security

We are all aware that Climate Change will affect our ***Food Security*** – leading to food shortage; price increases, amongst others.

Energy Response

In starting to mitigate the impact of *Climate Change*, we must invest more of our resources in green or renewable energy in the form of solar energy, wind or hydro power.

COP17

Your views and inputs raised during this summit are very significant, and will be considered when our Province's contribution is consolidated and included into South Africa's position paper at the forthcoming ***Climate Change*** talks in Durban.

Just before I conclude with our declaration this summit shall be committing a serious green collar crime if we don't acknowledge our learners for being the stars of this summit, I am certain their activism will be sustained beyond this summit.

I now take this opportunity to hand over the certificated to the following learners with the provision that a formal prize giving will be held at a later date to be announced by the project managers of the climate change speech category competition.

1. Ouma Makofane from Makake Secondary School in Graskop – Ehlanzei District
2. Pinky Phakathi from Imizamo Yethu Primary School in Piet Retief, Gert Sibande District.

Poem Category:

1. Thulebona Ngwenya from Qalani Primary School in Driefontein, Gert Sibande.

Music Category:

1. Learners from Isibane Sezwe Primary School in Driefontein, Gert Sibande.
 - a. Nakubonga Nkosi
 - b. Siphesihle Mkhwananzi
 - c. Nqobile Vilakazi
 - d. Silindiwe Methula
 - e. Thande Shongwe

Ladies and Gentlemen I count on your indulgence as the summit gives these learners a standing ovation.

Confirmation of declaration:

MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Drafted on the occasion of the Mpumalanga Climate Change Summit 6-7 October 2011, Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Nelspruit.

PREAMBLE:

Acknowledging the particular vulnerability of our Province, including agricultural resources, biodiversity conservation, urban and rural areas, to the impacts of climate change, as per assessment reports, research and on-the-ground experience.

Recognising that our vulnerability is exacerbated by high levels of poverty, inequality and limited adaptive ability of natural resources.

COMMITMENTS:

The signatories to Mpumalanga's Climate Change Declaration acknowledge the reality and importance of climate change and are committed to:

- mitigating our climate change impact through reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Co-operating with affected sectors (e.g. agriculture, water, mining, forestry, local authorities, industry, energy, transport) to reduce impacts. Areas of cooperation, include the transfer of technologies relating to inter alia, the following areas:

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation
 - Support for adaptation projects in the Province in line with sustainable development priorities
 - Technology development initiatives
 - Energy efficiency and renewable energy
 - Agricultural efficiency and sustainability
 - Exploring the feasibility of carbon capture and storage
 - Broad collaborative scientific research related to global climate change and energy and climate sciences.
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- educating and creating awareness to establish programmes and projects in partnership with all stakeholders to respond to the challenge of climate change
 - improving cooperation between government, business and all social partners to address environmental challenges
 - ensuring the conservation of biodiversity in the province
 - ensuring the contribution of ecosystem goods and services to the social and economic development of the Province
 - Increasing the contribution of a low carbon footprint in the economy of the province through the promotion of renewable energies and the creation of sustainable livelihoods.
 - Promoting the development of a green economy through inter alia through the implementation of the waste management hierarchy, cleaner technologies and development mechanisms

- encouraging government, business and industry to engage in sustainable climate change projects in Mpumalanga.
- Ensuring green design in urban and rural settlements

The Declaration recognises that all levels of government, communities and sectors, play a key role in our collective response to the challenge of climate change, and publicly demonstrates our commitment to action.

The role of strategic stakeholders are defined as follows:

- **Policymakers**

- Set up a provincial innovation council in the Office of the Premier or the Office of the District Mayors and have regional innovation forums at district municipalities to address the agenda on climate change and the relevant departments to partner with Government as we continue to set up an enabling environment, Government will develop policy instruments to change behaviour of industry and society at large. (the National Department of Science and Technology, National Department of Trade and Industry and the Dedet in the Province should be the strategic co-ordinator of all departments and Municipalities.)

- **Financing**

- Trade and Investment agencies, MEGA, IDC, NEF, Other regional agencies should design funding models that also address contingency plans to growth path and climate change incentives to manage long term rehabilitation plans.

- **Operators**
 - Technology, Innovation agency, Science parks, public Research and development Centres and FET's should be the strategic support base for the province in rapid prototyping solutions to climate change.

- **Private sector**
 - Industry associations, research institutes, funds, foundations, enterprises at local and district municipalities should be the implementers of these rapid prototype solutions developed by the operators to bring a competitive sustainable advantage for the Province to de-marginalise communities.

I now declare the summit officially closed. Thank you all for your valuable contributions made. Please don't stop now, as we all go back lets see how we can save tomorrow today in every action! Have a safe journey home.

Let us all rally behind our two national teams this weekend – Bafana bafana vs Sierra Leone here in Mbombela and Maboko book in the world cup in a do or die quarter final against Australia...

I thank you!