

## **MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FROM THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR MN MOKOENA, MPL, DURING THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY AT EMALAHLENI, NKANGALA DISTRICT.**

**Thursday, 07 June 2012**

- The Executive Mayor from Emalahleni Local Municipality, Councillor Salome Sithole;
- All Councillors present;
- Our permanent partner - Xstrata's General Manager for Environment and Community Development, Mr N. Dooge;
- Officials from the Department and the municipality;
- Members of the Media;
- Distinguished Guests;
- Ladies and gentlemen;

### **Happy World Environment Day!**

Ladies and Gentlemen it is worth repeating that as a country we have made significant strides in recent years, and as part of the family of nations of the world to protect and conserve our Environment not only for ourselves but the generations to come.

I want to kick start this celebration by acknowledging the impressive contribution made by municipalities across the country in sustaining and managing our environment.

I can hear the fauna and flora of our province singing praises congratulating all Municipalities who continue to participate in the Greenest Municipality Competition.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on this note let us one more time applaud Steve Tshwete Local Municipality for the consistent outstanding performance in this competition both provincially and nationally over the last few years.

Hopefully we are all ready, willing and able to share their experiences and learn some of the best practises from them.

The departure point of the competition is to re-ignite pride, commitment and passion for cleaner environments and sustainable development; it is for this reason that we should also congratulate all Municipalities participating in the Greenest Municipality competition. Whether they have won a prize or not let's put our hands together for them.

Through events such as the Greenest Municipality Competition, and World Environment Day we are able to mobilise the society

and transform the mind set in that, gone are the days when a green settlement area was representative of an upper class, affluent, upmarket suburb designated for the selected few whilst townships and villages became a symbol of a lifeless desert.

Greening our Municipalities wall to wall is not just about winning a prize but to mitigate and adapt to broader environmental challenges characterised by Climate Change, Ecological Scarcities and all forms of environmental risks.

Our individual and collective, universal mandate is to prevent pollution and ecological degradation, promote conservation through ecologically sustainable development.

It is along this mandate, that the world commemorates the **World Environment Day** on 05 June annually, since 1972. This day is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action. It is also a day for advocating partnerships among all stakeholders or perhaps, even more correctly, among all species living on this unique planet, and sharing a common future.

This year's celebration of the **World Environment Day** focuses on the Green Economy, hence the International theme for the year is the **“Green Economy: Does it include you?”**

This emerging economy is therefore the only alternative we have, if we subscribe to the notion that: **“Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations.”**

Green Economy is about sustainable energy, green jobs, low carbon economies, green policies, green buildings, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, industry, energy efficiency, sustainable tourism, sustainable transport, waste management, water efficiency and all other resource efficiency.

To give it a meaning to the ordinary man in the street, Green Economy is about three fundamental principles namely:

- Culture which balances consumption and sustainability
- Energy efficiency and alternate sources of energy.
- Cleaner Technologies which seek to lower carbon emissions.

I must indicate upfront that climate change mitigation and response strategy is not necessarily rocket science, each one of us can contribute by doing basics such as:

- **Watch those watts** – The golden rule when it comes to electricity, if you are not using it, SWITCH IT OFF!!
- **Reduce-Reuse-Recycle** - if we apply our minds to practice Reduce-Reuse-Recycle, we will help conserve energy, reduce pollution and greenhouse gases from resource extraction, manufacturing and disposal and subsequently help to fight global climate change, or at least minimize the rate of the change;
- **Transport** - 20% of greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector. Use public transport or join or start a carpool;
- **Consumer matters and food** - don't forget to take your own re-usable bag when shopping or otherwise re-use your plastic shopping bag. Buy locally grown and produced foods as it will save fuel and keep money within your community;
- **Save water** - municipal water systems require a lot of energy to pump, purify and distribute water to households, and saving water, especially hot water, can lower greenhouse gas emissions;

- **Plant trees** - apart from all the values that trees provide us such as moderating climate change, improving air quality, conserving water, providing habitat and habitat material for man and wildlife, providing food, providing medicine and so forth, they have carbon sequestration ability as well. Our advice is to plant indigenous trees as they are in harmony with their environment and form a crucial role in the ecology.

On that note I wish to formally tender my sincere and humble apology to all the participants here today, please also note that my leave of absence at this event will not make it any less important. **Let us ensure that the protection of our environment is everybody's business.**

Green Economy: Does it include you?

Please enjoy the rest of the proceedings.

I thank you!