

SPEECH PRESENTED BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL, DURING THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE NORTH RHINE WESTPHALIA MPUMALANGA FORUM AT BUNDU LODGE, DRUM ROCK, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Tuesday, 13 April 2010

Programme Director;

The Leader of the North Rhine Westphalia delegation, Dr Huls;

Representatives of the North Rhine Westphalia civil society;

Delegates from various government Departments;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

I am humbled and honoured to address the Annual Conference of the North Rhine Westphalia Mpumalanga Forum; an important forum during which we will collectively agree on strategies that are aimed at continuing to improve the lives of our people. As the ruling ANC-led government, we have committed to **“speed up effective service delivery to the people;”** a commitment which we believe that **working together** with interested and caring social partners like yourself, we will be able to fulfil. We continue to appreciate the significant contribution made by your government by contributing towards our dream of **“a better life for all”** the people of this province through the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding with the government of North Rhine Westphalia.

Since 2001, we have collaborated to craft a path towards **“a better life for all”** by coming up with projects, programmes and cooperation areas as equal partners. I had an opportunity of meeting with the delegation from North Rhine Westphalia yesterday, and was encouraged by some of the ideas and work you continue to do in putting the cooperation agreement into motion.

Let me inform you that our government continues to regard our agreement with you, as a cornerstone of real development cooperation which also continues to improve South-North relations, as required by our common global challenges and the mandates from the global community since the Millennium Summit and other global agenda on sustainable development. Last year during my visit to Germany during the event of the Bonn International Conference on Development Cooperation and Aid Effectiveness, I was touched by the common vision which the people of Germany shares with us.

Our challenges in the province are huge, but surmountable, only because we do not walk alone – but walk with a partner who can be trusted. Our biggest challenge post the economic recession, is to **speed up growth, create more job opportunities, decent work and sustainable livelihood.**

In operationalising the MOU, you selflessly continue to contribute on areas of **arts, rural development, poverty reduction and initiatives to fight HIV and Aids**, and this is highly applauded. Please continue with the same zeal, for our people deserve the best. Any contribution regardless of its size plays a crucial role towards realising the vision and commitments of our caring government.

Our exchange programme is an important instrument to learn more about each other and to have a real intercultural exchange between our people. Our youth wake up daily with new hope, knowing that they are worth more than they were yesterday.

As a rural province, the work in agricultural development and farmer support is making us produce more and better food, and empower the small scale farmers to become better business people. We will continue to tap into this area of cooperation, as we accelerate our rural development strategy and interventions in the province.

We hope that our cooperation agreement will go a long way towards assisting our government to realise its election promises, given that this is a people's contract we commit never to renege on. We continue to intensify our fight against TB, HIV and Aids and believe that you will continue to play a significant role in this regard.

Having listened to your presentations and summary briefings yesterday, I remain confident that the process you are about to engage in will deliver us a programme to 2013 that is ambitious, focused and implementable. We are looking forward to a comprehensive implementation plan in the identified themes and priority areas, and call upon you to continue to look for new opportunities for cooperation.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate the coordinators on both sides especially Ms Judy Greathead, who had to ensure that the cooperation agreement is implemented, yet on the other side she carried on with her duties in preparing for the hosting of the FIFA World Cup matches in Mpumalanga.

The CEO and the representative members and organisations of the Mpumalanga Forum in North Rhine Westphalia have continued to dedicate most of their energy to this project, and to a province they owe no allegiance to - for that we thank you.

Through the Office of the Premier and the designated Cooperation focal point, we will as a government make sure that this cooperation programme receives the necessary support it requires and we will make sure that our agencies, municipalities and public servants offer you the appropriate tools to fast track and add value to your projects.

You should leave this conference with new ideas, but better and more achievable, and you should before you return to Germany, take a short left and tour Mpumalanga; the nearest Kruger national Park gate is 20 minutes away; Maputo is

an hour's drive from here; and so is Swaziland, and you are in the Host City for FIFA world Cup - What more can you demand

I wish you a fruitful and successful conference.

I thank you!