

ADDRESS TO BE DELIVERED BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF EKURHULENI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY, CLR DUMA NKOSI, AT THE INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S 2007 ANNUAL CONFERENCE, IN PORT ELIZABETH, ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2007.

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR,
EXECUTIVE MAYORS AND MAYORS,
FELLOW COUNCILLORS,
CITY MANAGERS AND SENIOR
MANAGEMENT,
MEMBERS OF ILGM,
REPRESENTATIVES FROM ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT,
DEPARTMENT OF PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT,
PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT,
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Allow me, Programme Director, to highlight at the outset that it was with great humility and a great sense of privilege that I accepted the invitation to be part of this conference of the Institute for Local Government Management of South Africa.

Allow me, Programme Director, to open my address by stating what is common knowledge to most of the participants and attendees of this conference. Municipal Councils play a central role in promoting local democracy, and in addition to representing community interests within Councils, Councillors should promote the involvement of citizens and community groups in the development and implementation of municipal programmes.

This requires that in order to achieve this, municipalities must be supplemented with leadership, support and resources, in addition to enabling regulation and legislation for promoting local democracy and representing community interests. These are to be found in the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, The Municipal Systems Act, Municipal Structures Act, the Municipal Finance

Management Act and other relevant pieces of legislation, aimed at strengthening constitutional democracy in the country.

The import of the above operational scenario is that while national framework and support from other levels of government are critical for delivery, great trust between individuals and open and accommodative relationship between stakeholders is required. It is in this sense, that local government, as the coal face, of delivery, has a key role to play, in building what is our social capital, the sense of common purpose towards sustainability and effective and equitable service delivery.

This is the understanding that will assist us to contextualise the conference theme for 2007, namely “Rekindling community value system through reflective governance”, this in the wake of developments within municipalities throughout the country recently.

My brief is to address the conference on the topic “Leading by following: Lots of Responsibility, Limited Authority”.

Our constitutional democracy enjoins us as a nation to have a shared vision towards building a non-sexist, non-racial, united and democratic society where there will be peace and prosperity for all, and of necessity evolves a set of values to underpin the democratisation of our society.

This requires the building of the kind of political leadership that is able to unite coalitions and networks of among others, local interests that cooperate to build this shared vision, responsive problem solving and a commitment to work in open and transparent partnership with stakeholders, enhancing local democracy through raising awareness of human rights issues and promoting constitutional values and principles, amongst others.

In pursuance of the above, the political leadership of municipalities, comprising of Executive Mayors and Councillors and Mayors and Councillors depending on the system chosen or applicable, all are deployed to lead in their localities and become the face of their municipalities. In the eyes of our communities, these entail advancing community interests without fail in pursuance of the shared vision.

While as leaders in this level of government and guided by the mandate from our respective political organizations and sharing and appreciating the aspirations of our communities to this shared vision, a number of factors play themselves out to bring to a halt the process of advancing these aspirations.

High among these, is the availability of resources to meet the high volume of backlogs that our communities are faced with in terms of equitable and effective services to advance their developmental aspirations. This in most cases is compounded by the framework within which our municipalities operate, either being legislative or political. This scenario countenances the huge responsibilities that our municipalities and Councillors are expected to carry out.

We may here mention the problems encountered in addressing the issue of informal settlements. Our country is faced with a great problem around the growing number of informal settlements which in most cases are as a result of land grab, which in most cases is on unsuitable land for health and settlement where no basic infrastructure services are available or cannot be provided. Compounding this problem is the constitutional expectation to be afforded suitable accommodation before removing the settling community, within a stipulated period. Though the municipality has authority to remove people settling on unsuitable land for health and safety reasons, the courts have in a number of cases, decided in favour of communities thus settling, in pursuance of safeguarding their constitutional right to accommodation. This limits the municipalities authority while it greatly increases their responsibilities for the removal and identification of alternative accommodation before even removing these people who may even come from outside the area.

Developmental local government enjoins municipalities, in accordance with integrated development planning, budgeting and performance management to develop integrated perspective on development in their areas. This it is said will enable them to focus on priorities within an increasingly complex and diverse sets of demands as it will enable them to direct resource allocation and institutional systems to new set of development objectives.

This however, does not take into account the bureaucratic demands and limitations that play themselves out in implementation of programmes formulated which are short circuited by stringent policies that have to be complied with, either as a result of applicable legislation or resolutions authored by technocrats.

Added to these, are concerns that imply that failure to accelerate delivery of services to communities, feeds into perceptions of unethical conduct on the part of political leadership as well as management. This creates in communities an expectation of unimpeachable integrity on the part of political leadership within municipalities and management thereof.

I am hopeful and certain that this conference will enhance our search towards finding a solution that will advance municipalities to serve their communities within our constitutional democracy in pursuance of advancing their aspirations while confirming to the systems in place.

While acknowledging that a developmental municipality should play a strategic policy making and visionary role, while seeking to mobilize resources to meet basic and achievable developmental goals, it is perhaps important for us to revisit some of our legislative processes and provisions, in order to amend the restrictions placed on municipalities, especially politicians.

These in my view, will allow municipalities to exercise more authority and shorten their turn around period. In this case one may refer to the provisions of the Municipal Finance Management Act, which is used as a whip hanging on the backs of both officials and politicians, held a loft by Big Brother, who is always at the ready to sanction.

This Act, through its stringent prohibitory provisions has created the perception that Councillors, are in general, corrupt and are not to be trusted. In order to minimize the growing trend of protest action most of which are justified by allegations of uncorroborated acts of fraud on the part of Councillors and, of officials, in collusion, there is a need for a collective engendering of trustworthy and integrity on the part of

both Councillors and officials towards service delivery that protects and promotes the community value system and increasing trust and belief in our constitutional democracy.

There is a great and deep need for synergy between Councillors and Management if our municipalities are to realize the objectives of developmental local government and work towards improving the lives of our people for the better.

I Thank You All!!!