

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT SALGA LIMPOPO CHAPTER
CONFERENCE PRESENTED BY: MEC FOR FINANCE RWN TOOLEY
19TH SEPTEMBER, THE RANCH HOTEL**

Programme director

The leadership of SALGA

Executive mayors and Mayors

Speakers and Whips of councils

Councillors and distinguished guests.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good evening and thank you for inviting us to address you again, this time around ushering in the fourth term of a democratic and people centred local government.

SALGA holds its annual meeting in the month of September which is significant in many ways in the history of our country. It was in this month 39 years ago that a crime against progress was committed when Stephen Bantu Biko was tortured to death in custody of the Apartheid regime. The killers of Biko thought they were killing the ideas that he espoused when they murdered him. Like dictators before them those ideas did not die with Biko but continue to inspire countless people to this day as we saw with the hair protests in some of our schools recently. Especially in our model c schools.

This is also a heritage month in our official calendar as a country in that we will be celebrating the heritage of our country and its people this month particularly on the 24th day. Our heritage which offers opportunities for economic development as part of the tourism sector.

We also meet in this, our heritage month, September, just over a month after the reasonably successful local government election. Let me take this opportunity to

welcome the new councillors, I trust you will rise to the with humility and determination to improve the lives of our people.

Programme Director, the philosophy of black consciousness, of which Biko was one of the main proponent, was a logical response to the violent and vicious actions of the apartheid regime, which was epitomised by the Sharpeville, Langa and other shootings across the country, the banning of organisations of the people like the ANC, PAC and others. Our leaders being forced into exile, and detentions, resulting in the historical and epoch-making rivonia trial were the leadership of the ANC was sentenced to life imprisonment.

There was a lull in political activity amongst the people opposed to the apartheid system, and the regime also believed that it has broken the resistance of our people and furiously institutionalised the system of apartheid. Bantustans were brought into being, and dummy councils created in the urban centres. Bantu education became a reality in the schooling system, together with other pieces of legislation that made the life of black people in general, and Africans in particular a living nightmare.

The philosophy of Black Consciousness sought to, in the main restore the confidence of the black people in their humanity. That they are as human as everybody else. It promoted black pride and solidarity. Through organisations like the Black People Convention (BPC) of which Steve Biko was a leader, projects were created to uplift the lives of Black people, were professionals volunteered their services to the people, particularly in health care. Zanempilo in the Eastern Cape, were Biko offered his services despite his busy schedule, and Ithuseng in Limpopo, which was headed by Dr Mamphela Ramphele, are but two of many that were established.

These projects besides offering health-care to the people also looked at early childhood development, issues of nutrition through vegetable gardens and other self-help activities. We must remember that these men and women worked under very difficult conditions as they were banned, and their movements restricted. Biko and his comrades did all these things out of the love that they had for our people and country. The material incentives were not there. Some of the projects started then are still in existence even today. They have been sustained by men and women who love humanity.

It is this drive and commitment, programme director, that local government needs today. For us as the treasury we are interested in ensuring the financial part of each and every one of our municipalities become financially effective to ensure that we can account for the money we receive from the fiscus. We are well aware of the challenges that face our comrades and colleagues in this sphere of our government, because as a province we are the worst performing as far as audit outcomes of our municipalities are concerned. The majority of our municipalities, which are rural, have very low revenue streams, the challenge is how do we make them more sustainable and increase their revenue streams? Would electricity generation not be an option?

Drawing inspiration from the generation of Black consciousness leaders, our municipalities must be hard at work to ensure expansion of local economies. As we attempt to expand our economies, we must understand fully that our people are no passive objects of history; but active agents for transformation. Our attempts to be creative must as well not result in negligence of economic activities our people are engaged upon. In resolving our challenges and transforming the economy, we ought to rely on the energies, skills and expertise of our own people.

Our targeted support must in my go to all our people attempting to do their best to better their own lives and inevitably those of their immediate communities. It is now the time for our people to ask not only what their country is doing for them; but what they too can do for their country.

The children in the high schools who were protesting about their right to wear their hair naturally without restrictions brings into sharp focus the issues of heritage and pride in who we are as was shown during the time of activism of Steve Biko and his peers. Our cultural heritages if harnessed progressively can contribute in creating revenue streams for our councils. When travelling on the Burgersfort route one notices in many instances buses offloading pupils visiting the Bakone-Malapa cultural village. Across our province there are areas of historical importance and cultural significance which if properly developed can be patronised like the Bakone-Malapa is. Places like Bakone_Malapa besides being a source of revenue, they also

play an important role in terms of educating people about the past and also as custodians of such.

I am giving this example without information as to how the Polokwane Municipality is doing financially in this regard but as an observation from a distance. The point is our people should be seen as an asset and investing in them can have better outcomes. Municipalities can look at their particular circumstances, to see where they have competitive advantages. Partnerships with the private sector can also be explored. Our only area of interest will be that the public funds are used appropriately in accordance with the rules as the various legal prescripts enjoins us.

Ladies and gentlemen, tourism is a sector that the NDP and its provincial version regards as crucial in creating jobs and assisting in dealing with the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. It is in this context that we cannot emphasise more the importance of these sector. In this case the heritage sector. People want to see how we live our lives, taste the food we eat and experience other aspects of our cultural life.

How do we utilise the tertiary institutions in our areas in developing some of these ideas and making them come to fruition. Our tertiary institutions get their relevance by providing us with solutions to the challenges that we face at a local level. Were we are not utilising them we should explore ways of seeing how we make them partners in developing responsive municipalities.

As the treasury, both at provincial and national level we are also doing our bit in the construction of better local government as we alluded in relation to our Municipal finance unit. Various programmes are in progress as we speak.

Section 83 of the MFMA stipulates that the accounting officer, senior managers, the chief financial officer and other financial officials of a municipality must meet the prescribed financial management competency levels in line with the Regulation on Municipal Minimum Competency Levels.

A municipality must provide resources or opportunities for the training of officials to meet the prescribed competency levels.

The National Treasury together with Provincial Treasury took two funding initiatives to assist municipal officials to meet the competency level. The first one is

The LGSETA Municipal Finance Programme

This programme is funded by LGSETA in partnership with University of Pretoria. There are 84 officials attending the 8 week programme. The programme will end in January 2017. The second programme is funded by JICA (Japanese International Cooperation Agency). Paseka Consult has been appointed to facilitate the training for 20 municipal officials within Limpopo. The training duration of the training programme is 15 weeks. The programmes will end in May 2017

On Supply Chain Management the provincial treasury conducted various group training on the CSD (Central Supplier Database) to ensure that all municipalities are on board from the 01 July 2016. Colleagues; you are as well requested to assist in mobilising the entire society to input on the Central Procurement Bill by the National treasury, we must embark on that exercise with the intent of encouraging the expansion of our manufacturing base and diversifying our economy.

Since Municipalities are required to be MSCOA compliant by July 2017. The department and the MSCOA advisor from National Treasury are assisting municipalities to ensure that all municipalities comply with the Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts (MSCOA) by the 1 July 2017. This is performed through assessments and regular engagements held with municipalities

The Provincial Treasury conducted district specific training on MSCOA. System vendors were also invited to a live demo session to support municipalities in their journey towards MSCOA compliance.

Provincial treasury has provided officials to be seconded in Mogalakwena and Vhembe district municipalities as Chief Financial Officers and one official to Vhembe district municipality as the Accounting Officer. A financial specialist was allocated to Thabazimbi municipality to assist with resolving the financial management matters in that municipality.

Engagements were held with municipalities to provide guidance and support to ensure that 2016/17 MTREF budgets are funded, relevant and sustainable. These and other measures hopefully will assist our municipalities up their game.

But we need to do more as municipalities to be able to respond to challenges in our municipalities. We can be responsive if we know what our people need and areas of concern regarding their lives. Research desks of the institutions of higher learning in our areas can assist in this regard. We must be scientific in how we run a people centred municipalities. Our community development workers together with ward committees should also be better utilised so we are able to respond adequately were challenges arise.

The recent local government elections have shown that democratic local government is alive in our country. It has also shown that the people indeed govern at a local level, of course we would be happy if the number of voters would be more than the turnout we had. Our province, according to reports, being one of those that had a low turnout during the recent elections. Nevertheless democratic local government is entrenched in our country and this bodes well for the country's future and maturity of our institutions. We take this opportunity to congratulate the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for once again delivering a credible election whose results were accepted by all political parties as such.

The elections have provided the councils of the various municipalities with the chance to renew themselves, so we do more to improve the lives of our people.

Programme director, as Steve Biko and his comrades did those decades ago in mentally reviving the fighting spirit of a demoralised people. We must once more build a new South African spirit. A spirit of a new patriotism and pride in our areas of abode. Foster pride amongst our people in their municipalities, so that indeed we advance people's power in those local governments.

The spirit of volunteerism that they displayed towards our people should inspire us to do more to build a local government that is sustainable, responsive and people centred. These will be possible because like those brave men and women we will be driven by the love for our people and our country foremost than anything else.

We should know that we do not own our lives and times anymore but have rendered those to the people. That is the only way that we can emulate those gallant men and women. It is because they did all those things that they remain the loadstars for future generations.

Let us also take a vow that future generations will say the class of 2016 changed local government for good, and that the type of local government that we construct will be a template for everyone on how to build a sustainable, responsive and people-centred local government.

We were extremely efficient as the ANC in uniting our people against the oppressive and fascist regime. We must now unite our people against all the things that are hampering our progress, like graft, poor supply chain processes.

We will be able to do this if we do not forget that as leaders we are supposed to be examples to our communities. We must represent the best in selfless service to fellow human beings. Our behaviour in public must inspire confidence in our people. We must as President Tambo taught us to always be the first to volunteer, and last to seek reward. And like a visionary that he was a submission he made in the 70's, in Tanzania, remains apt today he said 'Comrades if you think the struggle is difficult, wait until you have power.

I thank you.