

**SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE MEC FOR COOPERATIVE
GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, HONOURABLE FD
XASA AT THE PROVINCIAL MEMBERS ASSEMBLY OF THE SOUTH
AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (SALGA) AT THE
FISH RIVER SUN**

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**THEME: B2B, DEEPENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND
DEMOCRACY.**

Greetings and acknowledgements

Introduction

It is a great honour and privilege for me to have been invited as one of the key speakers in the Provincial Member's Assembly (PMA) of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). Today's theme is most relevant as it seeks to encourage all of us to engage in an honest, critical and constructive debate as we reflect on how SALGA has justified its presence in the fifteen years of its existence. Such a critical and constructive appraisal will empower all of us reshape the strategic thrust of SALGA to deal effectively with structural and systematic vexed challenges of local government.

As we are gathered here today, we must make a firm commitment as representatives of our people that the future will be better than the present and the past. We must at all times admit our failures whilst at the same time committing never to disappoint our people in the delivery of their expectations.

Create Hope

Esteemed guests, we must create hope that through sustainable government programmes, we will “heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on the democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.”

Presenting his political report in the 50th Conference of the African National Congress our departed former State President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela said, "The principal result of our revolution, the displacement of the apartheid political order by a democratic system, has become an established fact of South African society. The challenges of creating a people-centred society, of living up to the vision contained in the Freedom Charter, requires that all elements of South African society be subjected to genuine reconstruction and development. That process of reconstruction and development will also have to encompass the spiritual life of the nation, bearing on the moral renewal of individuals and institutions, as well as the ideas and practice of a new patriotism.”

As cadres committed to the best values of selfless sacrifice which should define our society, we should examine ourselves in a self-critical manner, individually and collectively, whether we live by these values. How do some of us fare on the scale of humility and respect for ordinary citizens and even more, on issues of conspicuous consumption and corruption?

We must answer these questions honestly, to be in a position to implement government programmes and create better communities through people-centred delivery of services.

BACK TO BASICS (B2B) Programme

Invited guests, of equally importance is the implementation of government's programme of action called Back to Basics (B2B) which relies on municipal political leadership and management to play their significant roles to serve our communities better. Through this programme we expect all public servants to exhibit the necessary commitment to change. That change must cascade from national to provincial and local levels so that all of us are accountable to change people's lives and create better prospects for the economy to grow and prosper.

In the province we have conducted diagnostic assessments in all 45 municipalities, developed their action plans and established Metro / District multidisciplinary teams to respond to identified challenges.

Moving forward, as the province we are targeting 16 municipalities for coordinated service delivery support package. The objective is to improve their current situation and ensure maximum impact for sustainability of these municipalities. The ultimate and important goal is to improve the lives of our communities.

We shall continue visiting these municipalities as provincial teams in collaborations with the municipalities, to attend to critical areas in each B2B pillar that can make a difference.

We can only succeed in these endeavours if we work together. Your full commitment in implementation of all 5 B2B Pillars is of utmost importance. And therefore, guests, you are all encouraged to fully participate in B2B implementation. Together we can serve our communities better.

15 years of Developmental Local Government

As the leadership must engage in an honest reflection on the fifteen (15) years of Developmental Local Government to be in a position to sustain our gains and consolidate our capacity to delivery sustainable services to our communities.

Some of the success stories since the existence of development local government include partnerships with the private sector through the Business-Adopt a Municipality programme, clean audits by the Sarah Baartman and Senqu municipalities and the promotion of harmonious working relationships between traditional leadership and local government structures, wall to wall democratic Municipalities, significant noticeable scale of service delivery, amongst others.

Deepen Democracy

As democrats we must ensure that we deepen democratic participation of communities through responsiveness to their needs, provision of sustainable services, implement socio economic development projects, creating safe and healthy environment and community involvement in all government programmes.

Our government is aware that without information, there can be no popular participation in its programmes and without popular participation there can be no lasting legitimacy and by extension democracy fails.

Ladies and gentlemen, some of the characteristics of poor functioning municipalities include political and administrative instability, factionalism, Committees that do not meet, fraud and corruption, low service delivery, power and water outages, theft of assets, poor maintenance of infrastructure, qualified and disclaimer audit results, poor and institutional management. Once these issues are left unattended to they lead to

community dissatisfaction hence an increased number violent community protests demanding better services.

COGTA's recent assessment of the performance of municipalities showed that over a third are doing well, just under a third are not doing well and a third have the potential to do well.

In this context, our department stands ready to create an enabling environment to enhance service delivery through integrated support services to municipalities and traditional leadership institutions.

Through our increased support to municipalities we have seen an improvement in the expenditure of the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) which currently stands at 96%. We remain committed to implement the District Support Centre Model to bring services closer to the people and strengthen our service delivery machinery.

Our department continued to assist municipalities on their oversight and administrative functions through the establishment of 45 Audit Committees and Units and Municipal Public Account Committees (MPAC).

The restoration of the dignity and role of traditional leaders includes the transformation process for it to co-exist with democratically elected institutions. In this context, our department provided assistance for the participation of 257 Traditional Leaders in Municipal Councils.

Mobilisation of Stakeholders

The B2B programme is premised on changing a set of fundamental relationships that underpin our Constitutional order namely:

- Between local government and the people we are meant to serve (putting people first, instilling a culture of ‘service’ rather than ‘service delivery’).
- Between leaders and the municipalities they are meant to lead (good governance rather than extractive elites).
- Between people and the public services they receive (responsible citizenship, payment for services).

President Jacob Zuma is instructive in this regard when he said,

“Municipalities should communicate with citizens at all times to reduce the level of frustration and anger among people who demand service delivery. When there is a delay, they should be informed. If there is water or electricity cuts, for whatever reason, they should be informed and told when this will be fixed.”

We require a country wide mobilisation of stakeholders within government and civil society more broadly, to address possible fears from some of our partners and stakeholders. By so doing, we will build a coalition of those who want B2B to succeed as a service delivery programme of our government. Such a coalition should provide impetus for more effective oversight, removal of obstacles and drive change at a local level.

As South Africans we feel proud of our achievements and commit ourselves to work towards a shared future. In this context, the National Development Plan (NDP) is the country’s roadmap to the promised land of a better life for all to realize the benefits for generations to come.

We still have a long way to go to improve the lives of all South Africans, black and white and realise a better life for all.

In conclusion, the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030 implores us as follows,

“Drawing on our collective successes and failures as a nation, we need to do more to improve our future. On the present trajectory, South Africa will not achieve the objectives of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality. There is a burning need for faster progress, more action and better implementation. The future belongs to all of us and it is up to all South Africans to make it work”.

I wish the Provincial Members Assembly of SALGA success, confident that, as we navigate our way forward, we will remain faithful to our pledge to serve the people of South Africa, taking the necessary decisions that will ensure that we “heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based the democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.”

“Local government is everybody’s business, let us make it work.”

I thank you.