

ADDRESS BY MPUMALANGA MEC FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, HON. VS SIWELA AT THE GOVAN MBEKI AWARDS, EMALAHLENI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

2015

Programme Director
Nkangala District Executive Mayor, Clr TD Ngwenya
eMalahleni Executive Mayor, Clr FS Sithole,
Mayors from other Municipalities
Councillors
Members of the Executive Council
Portfolio Committee Members
Heads of Departments
Officials from National and Provincial Government
Officials from Local Government
Representatives of Government Entities
Representatives of Housing Associations,
Business Members
Social Structures
Contractors and Consultants
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome to the 2015 Govan Mbeki Awards. The awards are named after the late African National Congress's stalwart and one of South Africa's heroes – Govan Mbeki.

"Comrade Gov" as he was affectionately known played a major role in furthering the cause of building a nation free from inequality. He also received the Isitwalandwe Medal, the highest award given to individuals who are distinguished by their leadership and heroism.

This ceremony comes at a time where the country has to consolidate all the hard gains recorded since the dawn of democracy – but disturbing are the recent xenophobic attacks that enveloped the country in the last few days.

As a Province and its leadership we strongly condemn such barbaric attacks on foreign nationals.

It must be noted though as South Africans, we have to be mindful of the contribution and support made by fellow Africans in the fight against oppression – Apartheid.

Their contributions were priceless in a sense that they assisted our country to overcome past challenges meted out by the previous undemocratic government to the black majority of this country.

I would like to unequivocally state that Mpumalanga says **NO** to xenophobia and we will stop at nothing to ensure that such cowardice acts do not mushroom in the province.

Being a responsible government, I would like to commend the swift intervention by all concerned including President Zuma, Ministers, and some sport and arts personalities.

The Freedom Charter states that South Africa belongs to all who live in it – a conviction that as a country we should all embrace and live by it.

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It is my belief that all that are seated here tonight agree with me and doing your bit to denounce such acts.

Tonight's gathering is significant in the Department's calendar as stakeholders are honoured for their contribution they made in partnering with government to deliver integrated human settlements.

Their efforts during the previous financial year have been under observation to ensure quality service delivery.

The relationship that exists between government and its stakeholders is a marathon – rather than a sprint.

Like athletes who know what does it take to be in shape - practicing remains the focus at all times in order to secure the ultimate accolade.

The Department is enhancing its level of cooperation with all parties to deliver much needed services.

This country boasts of a world envied constitution that embraces the democracy we enjoy today. Our demonstration as a country to be united - in diversity - cannot be over emphasised.

Many countries have come to our shores to school themselves on our practice as a best model for unity and inclusivity.

Programme Director, it is for these reasons that we find it puzzling that community members are revolting against their fellow African brothers where in actual fact – other African countries aided South Africa to build the good country we have today.

Most of you will agree with my assertion that a level of intense communication and political education is needed to educate our communities.

Ladies and gentlemen, there're a myriad of views that are bandied around in relation to the ugly xenophobic attacks.

Some blame them on crime, poverty and economic disparities, amongst other, but the bottom line are that these attacks are not justified.

This democratic country has correct channels in which to register concerns. I can submit with NO ambiguity that the very same people who are the behind the turmoil have one way or the other benefitted from other countries.

Pleasing enough is that part of the interventions by government involved social dialogues and public pronouncements on the acts.

Ladies and gentlemen, enough about the depressing news.

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Amid these attacks, the Department in cooperation with its stakeholders continue to deliver sustainable human settlements.

The department's new approach on integrated sustainable service seeks to address human settlements delivery in a comprehensive way.

The approach emphasises the need to establish human settlements within close proximity with economic, transport, health, educational, and social facilities, among others.

Let me inform tonight's gathering that government is no longer focusing on just delivering housing units – but a new advance of establishing integrated sustainable human settlements.

During the recent State of the Province Address, Premier DD Mabuza assured the public about major integrated projects to be rolled-out by the department this year – an obligation we are heading to the latter.

Whilst delivering on major infrastructure projects, we will not disregard our rural households that equally need services.

Our delivery quest compels us to ensure we provide a house with water, proper sanitation, electricity and all other amenities to deserving households.

The services ought to impact on Gogo Skhosana at Siyabuswa, Babe Manzini at Phola and Mama Nyathi at Marite.

The Freedom Charter states boldly, **“All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security”**.

This is an opportune time and an honour for me to reflect that the awards are aimed at bringing the participants and partners together and thanking them for their efforts in trying under very difficult conditions to help the homeless own houses.

Programme Director, the Department is now focusing on the holistic approach to providing houses that have all the requirements as all complete dignified houses need to have.

Delivery of complete houses will now be fully fledged houses with internal portable water, sewer system, roads and community amenities like crèches, playing fields, clinics and community halls. This then will provide proper settlements to communities.

The Govan Mbeki campaign honours best performing contractors who played a key role in delivering much needed services to communities.

Best performing participants in various categories are awarded accolades in recognition of their work. The awards will culminate in a national event where all provincial champions will compete amongst themselves.

The Department hopes that the awards will continue to be a programme that will trigger enthusiasm and motivate all to make the province proud of its contractors and other stakeholders.

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Ladies and gentlemen, when one considers the huge backlog and challenges facing the industry; it is befitting to urge all partners to join hands in service delivery.

Human Settlements is a social responsibility, hence the call to join forces and have a common vision to shelter our communities.

In a month or so, I will be delivering the Department's Policy and Budget Vote for the current financial year.

It is where all our plans and approach for the future will be outlined. But those plans have to start somewhere and be supported by someone.

That somewhere is seated here.....
And that support is from all of you.....

Once again, you are all winners.

Enjoy the evening.

Congratulations.

Thank you.