

**ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE PREMIER; MR SENZO MCHUNU ON THE
OCCASION OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION OF MANDENI LOCAL
MUNICIPALITY
20 NOVEMBER 2014**

Programme Director;

Your Worship the Mayor of Mandeni Local Municipality, Cllr Zulu;

Councilors present;

Municipal Manager, CFO and other Officials;

It is an honour to share this platform with all of you. It is for the first time since my inauguration as the Premier that I get an invitation to address the Strategic Planning of a municipality.

It is true that over the past few months I have addressed councils of various municipalities but when as the provincial government we have been forced to intervene to restore stability.

Today's session is a breath of fresh air and I want to congratulate the leadership of this municipality for being proactive.

My presence here today underscores the importance we, as the executive arm of government in this province, place on seamless service delivery to our people.

I have taken great interest in your planning process because you are a municipality that also covers areas that had thriving industrial zones, which went through distress and collapse. Part of our programme on rural development is the revival of small town economies, in order to do away with the 'dead town' phenomenon that characterized the stagnation of economic growth across South Africa.

I am encouraged by the seriousness that you have shown on reaching out to the provincial government and myself as your Premier. This is what the founding fathers of our democratic South Africa and architects of our Constitution that was adopted in 1996 envisioned on the concept and principle of inter-governmental relations.

The two spheres of government are independent but equally inter-dependent. Your invitation to myself as the leader of provincial government that is a centre of governance, demonstrate your own determination to position yourselves as a municipality striving to occupy the centre of service delivery within your district municipality.

We cannot claim to be the centre, but not engage with the periphery of such a centre. That is why we need to look at the relation between the two institutions as that of spokes and hubs as they exist and function, in a wheel of a bicycle. The two need each other to function as a working wheel.

The programmes that the provincial government crafts, will be meaningless without the active and cooperative role by the municipality. Plans get designed at the higher level, but the practicalities of any investment, get to be processed or frustrated at local level. That is where by-laws can facilitate or impede on actual realisation of an investment.

The Mayor asked me to reflect on the following topics:-

- Back to Basics- servicing community better and expectations on this regard from the Provincial Government.
- Provincial Growth and Development Strategy - role of the municipality to ensure vertical alignment.
- Operation Sukuma Sakhe- role of the municipality

- Role of the municipality in combating HIV/AIDS in KZN.

- Fighting fraud and corruption in the province

Last week we met as the eight (8) provinces under the African National Congress in a meeting convened by Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa in Mpumalanga. This meeting was to share best-practice on Operation Sukuma Sakhe. Yesterday after our Cabinet meeting, we met as the Provincial Aids Council where we again focused on Operation Sukuma Sakhe as a model for doing things differently towards total eradication of poverty. I would like to touch on few issues.

Firstly, I have always stated that one of the greatest achievements of this democratic government was the establishment of the local sphere of government as the coalface of governance and service delivery.

The role of local government in promoting economic growth, job creation and alleviation of poverty has poignantly been expressed in array of policy frameworks formulated by the ANC-led government.

Chapter 7 of the country's Constitution has clearly positioned the sphere of local government as developmental sphere of our constitutional governance order, both in form and content.

It places great importance on the role of local government as a key player in providing a democratic and accountable government to local communities.

The local sphere of government is expected to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner and to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.

Importantly, we observe that the success of this sphere of government depends on the strong and committed leadership.

We need a strong leadership that will ensure that local government remains the centre of popular democratic participation in the delivery of services to all our people.

It is for this reason that the President of the Republic His Excellency J.G Zuma convened the Presidential Local Government Summit which took place on the 18th September 2014. The President invited the Premiers, Ministers of Cooperative Governance, Mayors, Speakers, Chief Whips, Municipal Managers and Chief Financial Officers from 278 municipalities.

Traditional Leaders, civil society and business leaders were also invited to discuss ways and means of strengthening service delivery in our municipalities.

It should be remembered that ahead of the local government elections in 2011, leaders of various political parties conducted home visits asking people to vote for their political parties.

Issues like provision of basic services such as water, electricity, roads, housing and unemployment, always came under the spotlight when leaders of political parties were visiting homes to canvass for votes. This drives the message that when it comes to basic issues, people do not differentiate on the sphere of government. This underscores the wisdom of the architects of our democratic order in their conclusion that these spheres are inter-dependent.

On Tuesday I addressed the Capacity Building Workshop for the establishment of District Business Development Agencies.

During presentations all speakers referred to statistics.

For instance, the official unemployment rate in KZN is at 22%. In 2012, Zululand District had the highest rate at 31% followed by Umzinyathi and Amajuba both at 28,5%.

Umkhanyakude, Zululand and Umzinyathi Districts had the highest levels of poverty in KZN at 66, 7%, 61% and 59, 6% respectively.

EThekweni, ILembe and uMgungundlovu experienced the lowest poverty levels in the province.

I am highlighting this statistics just to underline the importance of the local government as drivers of local economic development. The people who voted in the local government elections in 2011 expect this municipality and other municipalities in general to create employment and deliver basic services.

In my address there, I mentioned and stressed that our administration, makes it no secret that our intention is to position KwaZulu-Natal as the gateway to the sub-region of Africa. We equally, are open about our intention to position KwaZulu-Natal as the preferred destination for tourism, investment and trade. If we achieve this, we could say with confidence that our generation in the governance of this Province, fulfilled its small part in advancing key outcomes of our 53rd National Conference.

I am encouraged by this session and I must state that as the provincial government we do not want to interact with municipalities when there is a violation of Chapter 7 of the country's Constitution.

It is for this reason that the provincial government departments are ready and willing to work in partnership with local authorities.

The national and provincial governments have a Constitutional duty to assist municipalities.

Section 154 says that, “The national government and provincial governments, by legislative and other measures, must support and strengthen the capacity of municipalities to manage their own affairs, to exercise their powers and to perform their functions.”

When we inaugurated this government on the 26th May 2014, we committed ourselves to building the economy and ensuring job creation. We undertook to work towards strengthening the provision of service delivery.

As guided by the Provincial Growth and Development Plan, we have focused on supporting the municipalities in developing Integrated Development Plans and in driving Local Economic Development to ensure that the identified sectors create job opportunities for the local communities.

The real results of our interventions are felt at local level. I have always stated that municipalities have to be proactive to take advantage of national and provincial government programmes in promoting certain sectors of the economy such as agriculture, tourism, Information Communication Technology and many others including the infrastructure revolution which is currently underway.

The provincial government is committed to working with municipalities to build social infrastructure such as community amenities, schools, clinics and new hospitals. There are other programmes such as the Extended Public Works Programmes which are undertaken by various government departments.

We say education and skills development has to be accelerated as the only true basis for empowerment of all communities. Education remains one of the top priorities of government. While local government does not have direct responsibility over the schools, many services will require support of local representatives.

The creation of an environment conducive to learning and teaching, fighting crime and ensuring peace and stability may be boosted by diligent councilors acting as a true representative of the community. Motivating the youth to participate in skills development programmes requires a focus of local representatives.

Progress has been registered by various municipalities in the area of creating road access for many communities and provision of tarred roads and construction of roads in previously inaccessible areas including pedestrian bridges to create access to schools, fields and clinics across impassable rivers.

Mandeni Local Municipality must work towards the acceleration of programs to ensure that tourism and agriculture for instance becomes catalysts for development.

We require municipalities that focus on such programs as to utilize the available resources for the benefit of communities, with the support of the provincial department that has concurrent responsibility in the creation of jobs for the local community.

Our commitment remains that of ensuring access to schools, clinics, and good roads for daily transport to work and access to economic centers as the basic necessity to create a better life for all citizens.

Mayors and councilors must play a role in ensuring that they assist community access to health facilities, clinics and hospitals. They need to mobilize community participation in the structures of governance such as hospital boards and clinic committees.

They should also participate in grass roots programmes to ensure access to quality services and the fight against serious diseases such HIV and AIDS, TB, diseases of lifestyles, cancers etc.

Councilors must be well versed with the provisions of the National Health Insurance to explain to community and be the local champion for a better health for all.

We expect councilors to participate in District and Local Aids Councils in order to turn the tide against HIV and Aids.

This is part of Sukuma Sakhe approach which is now being promoted by national government.

Interventions

I want to emphasize once again that it is always undesirable to put any municipality under administration in terms of section 139 (1)(b) of the Constitution.

The decision is always informed by the precarious situation in respect of finances and governance which compromises service delivery in the municipality.

When we intervene it is only when many attempts including support interventions to prevent the administrative collapse of the municipality have failed and we are always left with no other choice other than intervention to prevent services grounding to a halt.

Recently I addressed the leadership of Umtubatuba Local Municipality and we also intervened in Mpofana Local Municipality.

One issue our intervention sought to address was the ill-discipline among some of the senior officials in this municipality. There can be no excuse for mismanagement of public funds – and I am confident that you will agree with me - whether this occurs as a result of ill intent or a lack of requisite skills. The lack of capacity and skills is often just an excuse of poor service delivery.

We remain concerned about the remnants of ill-discipline in some municipalities. In recent times we have witnessed squabbles, wildcat strikes and the filthiness of the town. This often sparks outraged within the business community.

We need to root out the culture of delinquency whether on the side of councilors or administration.

Loyalty to the Constitution of the Republic

We must remind Councilors that there is a pledge of loyalty they committed themselves to when they assumed office. You committed yourselves to putting all the resources at your disposal to better the lives of our people.

You must uphold the principles of the Constitution of the Republic and be mindful of the fact that any deviation from the powers vested in you by the Constitution, will be tantamount to betraying the very source of our struggle for a free and democratic South Africa.

Officials who are entrusted with public finance cannot deal with it recklessly with no consequences that follow, this also applies to councilors who are not governing and performing strong oversight to the administration.

We must do everything in our power to get rid of the rot and the decay which has the potential to destroy the local sphere of government. Critically if this decay is allowed to continue it will destroy confidence that people have in this democratic government.

As the President of the country say: "Lets go Back to Basics

I thank you.