**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HONOURABLE MEC MNS MANANA DURING THE PROVINCIAL SOCIAL COHESION SUMMIT**

**EHLANZENI DISTRICT: DISASTER MANAGEMENT CENTRE**

**20 MARCH 2014**

Programme Director

Executive Mayor of Mbombela Local Municipality: Cllr Cathy Dlamini

Councillors present here

Invited Guests

Government Officials

Stakeholders from different sectors

Representatives from the Media

Ladies and Gentleman

May I take this opportunity and acknowledge the presence of all different stakeholders to this Provincial Social Cohesion Summit. We are excited that you have deemed it fit to be part of history making in the province.

The Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation is tasked with the management, promotion and regulation of all Sporting, Cultural and Recreational activities in the province and consequently the main drivers of social cohesion.

A draft National Strategy for Developing an Inclusive and a Cohesive South African Society has been developed whereupon provinces are expected to then develop provincial programmes to feed into this National Strategic Programme.

Programme Director; while society has overcome the deep political challenges of the past; however social divisions, economic inequality, poverty and exclusion, still persist.

Access to economic resources, education and work opportunities, as the National Development Plan states, remains largely based on “race, gender, geographic location, class and linguistic” factors.

South Africa remains a deeply divided society. Twenty years into democracy the country is still grappling with deeply entrenched inequalities resultant of apartheid system and the rate of transformation has been slow.

As a province, we managed to host several national and international events, and we have seen how the people of this beautiful province rally behind the hosting of the 2010 Soccer World Cup and both the AFCON and the CHAN tournaments.

The rainbow nation was at its best in supporting all games that were hosted at the Mbombela Stadium, sharing common transport to and from and the tournaments were incident free. This was a step in the right direction in the promoting of national unity and common nationhood.

This Summit offers us an opportunity and a platform to dialogue with each other on the kind of a society we seek to build. This gathering confirms that the promotion of social cohesion, nation building and national identity is considered a priority in the province. The strategy shall become a vague dream if decisions taken are not put into practice.

As we discuss, we have to bear in mind that we have greater responsibilities to put all our hands on deck and commit ourselves with dedication in the development and implementation of the provincial strategy as a guideline.

The strategy must provide a comprehensive framework to map out an implementation plan, approaches and structures to fully operationalize the province’s activities. The Social Cohesion Strategy will enable the province to explore the factors and trends that affect the nation building, unity and acceptance of one another in province.

The basis of the strategy is reiterated in the motto on the National Coat of Arms. The motto enjoins the citizens to unite in a sense of belonging and pride and also imbedded in the ‘ubuntu’ concept.

This concept refers to the notion that the concern of well-being of others, and a realisation that ones’ own humanity and well being is inextricably linked to that of the other. Therefore, if one’s own well being is threatened or harmed, the others’ well being is also threatened. In other words; well being of individuals is a communal concern.

We need to produce a strategy that will be articulated through the programmes and projects of all government departments, municipalities, the private sector and civil society. It is in this context therefore that a 5 year Provincial Strategy is being developed for the Mpumalanga Province.

Even though the strategy shall be developed for the province, its implementation will require innovation, commitment and teamwork among all the people of Mpumalanga.

The Nation Plan of Action (2011) has indicated a paradigm shift for South Africa in the realization of social cohesion by stressing that through social cohesion; there would be a rise in the living standard of the citizenry, reduction in poverty, growth of the economy as well as employment opportunities.

It is however noted that for such to happen, there is a need to have an active citizenry as well as effective government supported by a strong leadership.

According to **Glenda Wildschut (2007)** fromthe Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, increasing evidence shows that social cohesion and social capital is critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development.

Interventions to address high crime rate, high poverty rates, early school leaving , slow delivery of appropriate housing and community building projects and the after-effects of the pre-1994 cultural , political and economic divide, all focus on the necessity of building social capital in communities with the aim to strengthen social ties and integration.

**Glenda Wildschut** further recommends that all actors need to be involved (both government and civil society) to achieve the goal to foster social cohesion and integration.

Promoting social development and social cohesion is a political imperative. It is part and parcel of the post-apartheid order, which has consciously embraced the ideal of social cohesion through a number of programmes, initiatives and processes at various levels of government but also through the efforts of business, labour, civil society and citizens in general. (GCRO, 2011).

A community is cohesive to the extent that inequalities, exclusions and disparities based on gender, class, nationality, age, disability or any other distinctions which engender divisions, distrust and conflict; are reduced and or eliminated in a planned and sustained manner.

Building community cohesion is about building better relationships between people from different backgrounds including those from new and settled communities. An important area of community cohesion work is assisting individuals and groups to find consensual strategies or common ground around which they can work together.

Programme Director today is not a day of speeches but a platform to dialogue on issues that should strengthen our young democracy and the interventions for a developmental state.

I want to wish you all the best and fruitful deliberations. I hope that this Summit will come with recommendations and develop tangible and practical plans on how to build this beautiful province in particular and the country in general

**I THANK YOU**