**SPECCH BY MEC MNS MANANA DURING THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL LANGUAGE COMMITTEE**

**25 JANUARY 2012: GREEN WAY WOOD LODGE**

Programme Director

Representatives of PanSalb

Head of the Department

Invited Guests

New Members of the MPLC

I feel humbled for being invited to official launch the new Mpumalanga Provincial Language Committee. We launch this committee mindful of the mammoth task and challenges that this committee will have to navigate during their term of office.

Equally, we are all mindful of the fact that Language is at the centre of human activity, self-expression and identity. People all over are very particular with their languages. At some point language is a motive issue, it is very sacred.

Educators, development workers, linguists, government workers and politicians can attest to the fact that language is a vital tool for the achievements of set objectives. In simple terms, initiatives communicated through the language of a community receiving a project are well understood, received and accepted.

Making use of local languages can easily facilitate the delivery of government services such as tackling poverty, gender inequality, HIV and AIDS and job creation, just to mention a few. Research has proved that early education in the mother tongue improves the lives of children and their communities.

The point I am making is that people’s languages are vitally important to them. Through language people communicate, share meaning and experience their sense of individual and community identity. Loss of language and culture is frequently accompanied by large human and social costs, including poverty, poor health, drug and alcohol abuse, family violence and suicide.

The provincial Cabinet has approved the Provincial Language Policy. This policy will facilitate the development and management of languages more especially marginalised languages in the province. It will be the responsibility of this committee to work with government in ensuring that marginalised languages in the province are developed, promoted and protected.

I am well aware that the population of this province is expecting us to go beyond isiNdebele and isiSwati so as to cater Xitsonga and iSipedi speaking people. We will have to strike a balance whilst not loosing the official mandate from PanSalb.

We have assembled a team of competent man and women whom we are convinced they will execute their responsibilities and duties with aplomb. One of the challenges this committee will face, is the fact that the position of former colonial languages such as English, condemned our indigenous languages to the periphery of socio-economic development. This marginalisation of our indigenous language has a direct negative impact on the growth of our economy. This is so because language is at the heart of the development process of whatever kind.

One writer once said “Language is an emblem that switches an individual from misery to plenty, from backwardness to progress and from backwaters to the centre of life”. The drive to develop and promote our indigenous languages must be seen as part of the process of empowering the masses, give them a voice in society, enhancing the personality of their speakers and acting as a window onto the wider view, the wider world.

Programme Director, there is a direct link between development and language. Development in our societies can never be achieved without serious considerations of the role of our indigenous languages in social, educational, economic and political processes.

There is a need for the National Development Plan as adopted by the government of South Africa to be translated into our indigenous languages so that all our people can understand government plans and its intentions, so that the masses of our people can be directly involved in the development of our communities. This is what this committee must facilitate as a matter of urgency.

Since the rural masses do not know the European languages, obviously the best way of reaching them educationally is by means of their languages. Language structures our reality. It is possible to say that our command of language in general and vocabulary in particular bears a direct relationship with the sophistication and intricacy of our perception of reality. We see and understand as much as our linguistic ability permits.

Language development and promotion is important and very central in the development of our community. We place this mandate on the shoulders of the Mpumalanga Provincial Language Committee.

I wish you luck and success as you embark on the journey to locate our indigenous language at the strategic centre of community development.

**I THANK YOU**