**Keynote Address By Honourable Mec MNS Manana During The Celebration Of The Human Rights Day**

DR JS MOROKA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, MARAPYNE

22 March 2014

Programme Director

Executive Mayor of Dr JS Moroka, Cllr NJ Mahlangu

Colleagues from the Mpumalanga Executive Council

Members of Parliament present here

Members of the Provincial Legislature present here

The Provincial House of Traditional Leadership

Councillors

Invited Guest

The media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, on 21 March 1960 at least 180 black Africans were injured and 69 killed when South African police opened fire on approximately 300 demonstrators, who were protesting against the pass laws, at the township of Sharpville, near Verneeniging in the former Transvaal.

In similar demonstrations at the police station in Vanderbijlpark another person was shot. Later that day at Langa, a township outside Cape Town, police baton charged and fired tear gas at the gathered protestors, shooting three and injuring others. This behaviour by the South African police was condemned by the whole world.

Whilst we continue to condemn what happened on this faithful day and other evil deeds by the apartheid regime committed thereafter, we equally need to move forward and ensure that the struggles waged by the heroes and heroines against apartheid are recognised and honoured.

This we can do and achieve by ensuring that we deliver equitable and better service to our people more especially the rural poor.

Programme Director, we are gathered here to mark 20 years of freedom and 20 years of democracy. In 1994 a democratic dispensation was ushered, introducing a new era of human rights.

When the Constitution of the country was approved and enacted in 1996, it brought with it the Bill Rights. This was done to ensure that we break the chain of bondage and also release the majority of our people from suffering and apartheid.

Today our people can access services they were denied before. Today our people can contribute positively to the development of their society and the country.

The majority of our people more especially the poor can now access water, housing, electricity and sanitation. Through government funded projects, our people can now plough their gardens and grow vegetables to feed their families

Equally, this government admit that more still need to be done. We accept the fact that there are still communities who are without basic services. The level of crime against women and children is still at the unacceptable levels. The abuse of drugs by young people is at an alarming level.

In terms of 2011 Census Report the youth constitute the majority of the population of the province. And the majority of them are not working. This is the case even though access to education has increased.

This increase to access to education has allowed the youth to receive different skills. The challenge is to link the skills received from the education sectors with what the market requires.

Programme Director, the youth are the future leaders of tomorrow. President Oliver Tambo was said, “any nation that does not take care of its youth does not deserve its future.” This then present a danger to society in the sense that if we have our youth in drugs, the future of the nation is doomed.

We are therefore duty bound, as government working together with all structures of the society, to save this nation from dangers posed by drug abuse. This is a serious scourge and the participation of all stakeholders in its eradication is very essential.

What all of us need to eternalise is that the human rights enshrined in the Constitution come with responsibilities. Today more than ever before we need to emphasize the responsibilities we all have in moving our nation foward.

The values of freedom, respect for human rights and the principle of holding periodic and genuine elections are essential elements of democracy.

In turn, democracy provides the natural environment for the protection and effective realization of human rights.

According to the Article 21 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government, this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be the universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedure”.

Our widely recognised Constitution provides for the following:

* Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
* Freedom of association
* Freedom of expression and opinion
* Access to power and its existence in accordance with the rule of law
* The holding of periodic and free elections
* The separation of powers
* The independence of the judiciary
* Transparency and accountability in public administration
* Free and independent media

Government is in agreement that there are three main challenges affecting society and they are inequality, poverty and unemployment. Working together with our communities we need to move with the necessary speed to address inequalities. Social, economic, political and material inequalities intersect and act as barriers to development.

In order to achieve the society that we want, there is a need to embrace a holistic, rights-based approach to development that fundamentally focuses on equality, equity and inclusive participation

The concept of equality should be the defining element of social organization. It should not be just a mere tally of resources or something that arises from a contract between the individual and the state. It should apply at the level of that which makes human beings human.

Discrimination and prejudice related to race, gender, nationality and ethnicity deny equality, adversely affecting not only those being discriminated against but society as a whole.

Poverty is a universal problem. South Africa has experienced high levels of poverty. This has been revealed by recent studies conducted by the Statistics South Africa. Our people are suffering, some families can hardly afford to put food on their table, the growing number of child-headed families is increasing and the unemployment rate is also not helping the situation.

This scenario calls for an urgent interventions. Government alone cannot be in a position to turn this situation around. There is a need for a structural collaboration of all relevant players with the sole intention of fighting this scourge.

Government’s responsibility remains that of ensuring the creation of a conducive environment for all stakeholders and more especially the private sector to play their part in growing the economy of the county, thus benefiting the majority of poor people in the country.

When addressing the Anti-Poverty in Johannesburg in 2010, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe said: “South Africa has an advantage in that it commands significant amounts of resources, perhaps more than many other developing countries, to enable it to eradicate poverty over a shorter period of time”.

Deputy President Motlanthe believed South Africa could easily eradicate poverty in a period of not more than 20 years.

This means that we need to draw from the resources this country is blessed with to benefit our society. We need to maximise what we have for the benefit of all more especially the poor.

Government’s view is that poverty and inequality must be understood as threats that prevent society from functioning at an optimal level. We need to continuously explore policies, practices and systems to address poverty.

We need to empower women, particularly the rural poor; to ensure that they access to basic necessities in their communities regardless of class and status. The expanded social assistance has also improved the status of lives of women.

We all know that women in their majority are the keepers of families, they are left to look after their kids, grand children whose parents have either disserted them or have perished because of different communicable and non-communicable diseases. So if we empower women, we would have empowered the nation.

President Zuma said that “Programmes put in place by government must aim at restoring the dignity of the people. This can only be achieved through investment in habitable and decent settlement which would promote human dignity and stability in our communities.”

He also highlighted the fact that pervasive poverty experienced by the majority of the people of South Africa today is a result of the various Bantustan stands with no plan to develop roads, transport, sanitation, or any other infrastructure.

The response to all these challenges faced by our people more especially the rural poor, was the approval of the National Development Plan 2030.

The National Development Plan seeks to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 by drawing on the energies of the country’s people, growing an inclusive economy, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society.

The National Development Plan also focuses on the elimination of poverty, reducing the proportion of households with a monthly income below R419 per person from 39 percent to zero.

Other goals include increasing employment from 13 million in 2010 to 24 million by 2030; broadening the country’s ownership of assets to historically disadvantaged groups; ensuring that all children have at least two years of pre-school education and that all children can read and write by grade 3; providing affordable access to healthcare; and ensuring effective public transport

Today we are gathered here to recommit ourselves as government working together with all stakeholders to move our communities and nation forward. We commit ourselves to continue to build an inclusive economy that creates jobs. We shall promote local procurement from or local co-operatives and SMMEs

The transformation of rural areas is our priority. This will include meeting basic needs, land reform and creating rural enterprise development.

We will continue providing housing to qualifying households and connect an additional 1.6 million homes to electricity grid over the next 5 years.

We are happy with the increased access to education. Further we will introduce compulsory two-years of pre-school education, eradicate adult illiteracy and ensure that all the people of the province benefit from newly established University of Mpumalanga

Programme Director our government continue to commit itself to the provision of quality health care to all, expand comprehensive social security, fight crime and corruption and build a united nation and promote social cohesion.

We will achieve this by promoting a culture of dialogue, accords and commitments across society. Our goal is a united nation which is capable of accepting the diversity of our cultures.

We invite all of you to go and Vote on 07 May 2014. It is your democratic right to vote. Remember that this is a right some people died for. I am sure that all of you have already decided which party you are going to vote for.

My appeal is that vote wisely and intelligently so that you are part of the transformation of society. Your vote should put you inside of those who will be changing and developing our communities. You do not want to be left outside. It is raining outside there.

**I THANK YOU**