

**SPEECH PRESENTED BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE MPUMALANGA STAINLESS STEEL CLUSTER IN MIDDELBURG, STEVE TSHWETE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.**

**Tuesday, 08 December 2009**

Programme Director, Mr Glen Waldeck;

Chairperson of the Mpumalanga Stainless Steel Cluster, Mr David Nkosi;

Managing Director of Corrotherm, Mr Owen Maroleng;

Managing Director of Thos Begbie, Mr Eugene Roussow;

Champion of the Mpumalanga Stainless Steel Cluster, Mr Pieter de Wet;

Chief Director for Trade and Industry Development, Dr Joyce Pakade;

Government officials present;

Members of the media;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

*Good Evening!*

I am humbled and honoured to be part of this launch this evening, as the launch to me confirms our government's unwavering commitment towards economic development, and paving the way for decent job opportunities and sustainable livelihood, which is one of our five (5) major priority areas over the next five (5) years. We are pleased as the Department, to witness launch of the Mpumalanga Stainless Steel Cluster here this evening, an initiative which we supported from its conception stage. The launch of this initiative however, coincides with the Climate Change Conference currently underway at Copenhagen, Denmark from yesterday until December 18, 2009.

All countries of the world including South Africa, will be meeting over the next 10 days to agree on ways to reduce the depletion of the ozone layer, the result thereof being global warming. We are all aware that the major contributor towards global warming is the high levels of carbon dioxide emissions we are experiencing. This we experience as a result of industrialisation and the high number of cars on our roads, to mention but a few. We hope that all countries would at the end of the conference, agree to reduce the level of carbon dioxide emissions in order to save our planet. I can assure you that the current unpredictable weather we are experiencing for the first time in our history, is attributed to global warming.

Our position as a country on the outcome we want to see at the end of the Copenhagen conference is very clear – we want an outcome that balances adaptation, mitigation and development imperatives with climate change imperatives. And in order to achieve this, we must be allowed to continue to grow our economy in order to address our development challenges. We cannot therefore, be treated as developed countries given our under-developed circumstances. We still need to provide the required economic and social infrastructure to uplift the well-being of our people. However, when we continue to do this, we must do it responsibly and protect our environment by reducing the levels of carbon dioxide emissions. Our challenge therefore, is that we must do this using clean, low-carbon technology.

Given our financial situation as a developing country, we do not have the means to finance new technology. And according to President Jacob Zuma, the developed countries should come up with a strong financial package to finance such new technology, if we are to contribute meaningfully towards reducing the levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

The President has also urged the developed nations to take on deep emission reduction in line with what is required by science. Also writing on the issue under the title, “the pressure is on us to act,” in the Sunday Independent of 06 December 2009, Water and Environmental Affairs Minister, Ms Buyelwa Sonjica said and I quote, “The developed nations have an obligation to support the developing world in achieving (the objective of reducing the level of carbon dioxide emissions) and should help with finance, technology and capacity building.” Her argument, and ours also, is that these climate challenges the world facing, are mostly attributable to the industrialised nations, hence our call that they must own up and assist us.

We are committed as the country, to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions by 34 per cent by 2020 with the help of the industrialised nations, and this is the commitment we are taking to Copenhagen. As the province, we acknowledge our historical dependence on coal as the source of energy; and that coal burning contributes to the emission of greenhouse gases, especially in this District around Emalahleni, hence we have started to act. As part of our interventions, we have installed nine Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations across what is called the Highveld National Air Pollution Priority Area in order to monitor air pollution. This area covers Delmas, Emalahleni, Steve Tshwete, Dipaleseng, Govan Mbeki, Lekwa, Msukaligwa and Pixley ka-Seme municipalities. The monitoring of the area will assist us to review the level of emissions and take the necessary precautionary measures.

Programme Director, ladies and gentlemen; despite these negative impacts on our environment, and not disregarding the call for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, we strongly believe the provision of sustainable livelihoods for our people cannot be compromised.

With the launch of the Mpumalanga Stainless Steel Cluster this evening, we believe a number of people will receive permanent employment – the ripple effect of it being that, they would be able to feed their families thus reducing poverty and hunger and ensuring sustainable livelihood. Our aim is to support and collectively grow the stainless steel manufacturing industry in the province, in order to continue to contribute meaningfully to the economy of Mpumalanga and South Africa in general. But in the process of operating this initiative, let us do that with caution considering the effect the emissions have on our environment. We have a collective role to protect the environment for future generations – and we cannot fail them.

**Working together, we can do more** to contribute towards reducing the greenhouse gas emissions and safe our environment.

May I on the same breath, take off my hat to congratulate Anglo Coal for their initiative to recycle one of our scarce commodity, that is, water, for human consumption. This happens as the country is facing dire water shortage, and if predictions are anything to go by, South Africa would in the next 20 years, not have enough water to cater for its people. It is therefore our collective responsibility, to preserve this valuable rare commodity. Through investing in the process to purify the water they use in their daily operations, Anglo Coal has ensured that the people of eMalahleni continue to have clean drinkable water. If we do not work together to save water, we run the risk of water shortages by 2030.

**Working together, we can do more** to preserve and conserve our water resources for the benefit of generations to come.

As we are about to close the worldwide 16 Days of Activism Campaign against the Abuse of Women and Children, may I on behalf of our people, urge all of you to make this campaign a 365-days event. “Don’t look away – Act against abuse!” These mostly vulnerable members within our communities have pinned their hopes for survival on the same people who abuse. Let’s all say NO to Women and Child abuse, for they need our love and protection.

**Working together, we can do more** to build a safer and caring South Africa that truly belong to all; a South Africa that loves and protects its women and children.

And as the year draws to a close, may I also seize this opportunity to wish you and your families, **a Merry Christmas and the New Year** filled with opportunities and blessings. And as we indulge in the festivities ahead, let us do that responsibly, remembering the commitments we must fulfil in the New Year.

As we prepare to host the world during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, let us get ready to give them Africa’s warm welcome. Let us show them that Mpumalanga is the home to all visitors. We must treat them like kings and queens if we want them to come back. This is because in our culture, visitors bring lots of luck and possible prosperity. If they stay longer than they had planned, they will contribute towards growing our tourism sector and our economy, which is still recuperating from the effects of the recent recession.

As I close, a Chinese proverb says and I quote:

*“If you want to know your past - look into your present conditions.  
If you want to know your future - look into your present actions.”*

Indeed, like one of our liberation stalwart, Mahatma Ghandi once said, *“the future depends on what we do in the present!”* Let us seize opportunities in front of us to prepare a brighter tomorrow; a tomorrow that we will all be proud of. And when that happens, we will go to our graves smiling – knowing that we did not fail the future generation and South Africa.

It is my pleasure and privilege, to launch the Mpumalanga Stainless Steel Cluster.

*I thank you!*