

**CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE ON BEHALF OF THE PREMIER BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL, DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE EHLANZENI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY OFFICE COMPLEX IN MBOMBELA (NELSPRUIT), MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.**

**Wednesday, 30 June 2010**

Programme Director;

Our host, the Executive Mayor of Ehlanzeni District, Councillor Constance Mkhonto;

MECs present;

Executive Mayors present;

Deputy Executive Mayor, Councillor Selby Khumalo;

Members of the Provincial Legislature;

Speaker of the District Municipality and Speakers of other municipalities;

Members of the Mayoral Committee;

Councillors;

Traditional Leaders present;

Distinguished guests;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Comrades and friends;

On the occasion of the State of the Nation Address on 11 February 2010, President Jacob Zuma said and I quote:

*“The defining feature of this administration will be that it knows where people live, understands their needs and responds faster.”*

I have deemed it necessary, to start my message by reminding ourselves that, as the President has said, the challenges ahead of us remain huge.

Our government in all spheres of government, has made significant strides to better the lives of our people over the past 16 years, however more still needs to be done. Indeed, we all have to join the call to make it our responsibility **“to know where our people live, understand their needs and respond faster.”**

It is common knowledge that a family, whose children are scattered all over, will in most cases not function efficiently. It is common knowledge that being a tenant, makes one to live his or her life from a suitcase, since you are not sure when you would be asked to leave. We therefore believe that the official opening of the permanent residence of the District Municipality, will bring together all its children, the employees, who have been scattered all over. Since from today you will be able to operate under one roof and not fear any possible eviction, we believe this municipality will respond faster to the needs of the people. This is a commitment that our government promised to see through, and no one will derail us from doing just that.

I am therefore honoured and humbled, to have been invited to come and witness the official opening of the new home of the Ehlanzeni District Municipality. This is indeed a historic moment in this District, as the opening coincides with the staging of the 2010 FIFA World Cup games on our soil. Our City, Mbombela, was one of the host cities for the games, and we are proud that we've just successfully hosted four (4) matches of the greatest sporting code in the world. We played host to the Chilean football team, and believe that the legacy of the World Cup, would bring the much needed investment into our province.

We congratulate the District, represented by the Host City, Mbombela, for having completed the required infrastructure for the World Cup well in time. This has proven to critics and pessimists, that Africa has the capacity to rise to whatever challenge being directed to its way. Congratulations on a challenge well executed.

Your relocation from the Bateleur building, and more recently Bell Towers at Bester Street, to this state of the art complex will save you financial resources in the form of rent, whilst doing much to increase productivity amongst your staff by building a sense of togetherness. We believe that this journey to a new base can only augur well for service delivery in the district. We wish to also welcome the presence of a new Disaster Centre, that has been constructed to take care of all emergencies and disasters in the region.

As a province, we cannot over emphasise local government's role as the centre of the democratic system and the service delivery machinery that we have built and nurtured since 1994. With the resources at your disposal, you are able to reach people and communities where we would otherwise not reach. You remain a critical player in ensuring the empowerment of our people as we seek to change their focus from one of 'entitlement,' to that of 'taking initiatives' to improve their lives in the areas where they live.

Executive Mayor, today is not only about celebrating a new office complex, but it is also about fostering a new commitment towards the principles of *Batho-Pele* within the staff that will be working here. We look forward to improved service delivery and public participation.

On behalf of the Premier, I would like to congratulate the District for having successfully completed this office complex, and wish them all the best in their work, as they strive to better the lives of our people.

Ladies and gentlemen, our government has committed to know where the people live, understands their needs and has started to respond faster. We do not have an excuse why we can't respond faster to the needs of our people. As we *Rediscover Life* in Ehlanzeni, let us all re-commit ourselves to ensure that we assist the ANC-led government to achieve its developmental goal. Our people deserve better.

**Working together, we can do more** to build a caring, people-centred province.

Once more, congratulations on the opening of your new home.

*Hakhensa!*