

REMARKS BY MPUMALANGA PREMIER TSP MAKWETLA AT THE PROVINCIAL SOWETAN COMMUNITY BUILDER OF THE YEAR AWARD CEREMONY

Nelspruit, Friday 23 September 2005

Programme Director
MEC Pogisho Pasha Mbombela Municipality Mayor Reginah Mhaule
Achievers
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an inspiration to have been asked to speak at this lofty occasion of the 2005 Provincial Community Builder of the Year Award.

Let me, from the outset, express a word of appreciation to the pioneers of these Awards. The late Dr Aggrey Klaaste and the late Sam Mabe who have in their own way contributed to the common goal of Nation-Building when the country needed it most, following decades of a systematic erosion of self-worth among African people and racial bigotry in our country.

We sincerely appreciate the continued good work done by those in the awards committee who are determined to keep the dream alive.

A word of commendation must also go out to the finalists and remind them that we laud the contribution they have made, and continue to make, to the welfare of our country and development of our communities. Our province needs you, it truly needs your strength, courage, knowledge, skills and dedication.

As finalists, and as nominees, you have put the interest and plight of other people, your people, first. In your work you have displayed leadership, character, community service, and public spirit. These are not idle attributes. They are the core of a fulfilled and fulfilling life.

Programme Director, through the efforts of these nominees to uplift their neighbourhoods and the broader community, they have given expression to the SOWETAN's spirit of community building.

In the year 2000 we committed ourselves to the Millennium Declaration, which led to the elaboration of the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Declaration was adopted at the UN Millennium Summit of Heads of State and Government on 8 September 2000. Among other things, the Declaration said: "We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone, and to freeing the entire human race from want."

Indeed your Community-building efforts and the Millennium Plan fit in nicely with our LETSEMA campaign, which seeks to mobilise and engage communities in the process of local development. The Letsema campaign, you will remember, was initiated in January 2002, and drew on the spirit and practice of volunteerism that had long been a characteristic of African culture in this country and further promoted by our struggle legacy.

The strength of the Letsema campaign was that it managed to draw together the voluntary efforts of community members and the resources and capacity of government in pursuit of a common development programme. It also helped in improving the quality of life of our people and complemented government efforts to stimulate economic growth and employment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we believe that because of all these and other efforts we were able to make progress in pushing back the frontiers of poverty. Our effort to meet the basic needs of the country's poor and marginalised, is gathering pace with progress recorded across a range of important sectors.

Despite challenges in a number of areas, there is no doubt that your interventions to assist government in directly addressing poverty and under-development are continuing to benefit greater numbers of South Africans.

But we must continue to ensure that as we lift our people out of the depths of poverty, we exert that extra effort in empowering our rural poor and advance the economic development of the rural masses.

This is one of our greatest challenges. While acknowledging that progress has been made in nation-building, much more work needs to be done to achieve a truly non-racial society. To this end we must, during this Heritage month, popularise national symbols and engage in cultural, sporting and other activities that will help to build a sense of a shared South Africanness.

In conclusion, Programme Director, let us all remember that the dream lives on whenever we reach out to feed the hungry and house the homeless. It grows whenever people of different races and religions work and pray together in the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood. Let us join together, united and determined to build a community rooted in a radiant spirit of social justice, compassion and love.

In the spirit of the late Aggrey Klaaste and Sam Mabe, let us embrace a new and energetic recommitment to serve. The dream lives on in our hearts when we struggle for a better life for all. To this end, let the legacy of SOWETAN as an institution grows all the time, and may those at its helm never fault, least of all only to satisfy their petty egos.

Let me once again offer my congratulations and, as your Premier, my gratitude to all of you for your commitment, for challenges conquered, for projects completed, for goals reached and even surpassed.

I thank you.