



**ANNUAL ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT TO THE
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES**

**“Working together to respond to the developmental
challenges facing our communities”**

22 MARCH 2011

**Hon Chairperson of the NCOP
Honourable Deputy President
Honourable Members**

As we march towards the 2011 local government elections which is now less than two months away, today marks another significant and welcome opportunity, for us as local government, to reflect on the progress made in expanding the delivery of services to our people. But it also presents an opportunity to acknowledge and confront the challenges facing government in our quest to speed up the delivery of services to our people.

Hon Chairperson, our greatest challenge has been embracing the constitutional spirit and ethos of cooperative governance, on the one hand, and the local government as a sphere, not tier, of government on the other. Local government is at the coalface of the developmental challenges facing our people and to them, is government. Communities are not interested in which sphere is responsible or not responsible for failure.

But effective performance against our Constitutional mandate requires a coherent and co-ordinated set of support initiatives from the other two spheres of government. This government, through our commitment to do things differently, has clearly recognised that local government is everyone’s business. But, while local government is uniquely positioned as the sphere of government closest to the people, it is the responsibility of all of government to ensure a better life for our people. The belief that we are one government is yet to be solidified in policy practice and implementation.

Giving meaning to 'working together'

The recent Provincial Weeks and Taking Parliament to the People initiatives provided permanent delegates to the NCOP and members of provincial legislatures an opportunity to undertake oversight visits and interact with communities in order to obtain "first hand" information on the developmental challenges that affect our people. The focus was much on cooperation between the spheres of government and how the NCOP, Provincial Legislature and local government could effectively work together to ensure that progress was made with regard to quality service delivery to communities in various provinces; that interaction at the level of the Legislature and the NCOP be more frequent and that the programme of the NCOP be forwarded in time to allow for proper planning and coordination.

The weaknesses of communication between ourselves as government was acutely exposed during that process. It is also apparent that as government, it is our collective responsibility to moderate unrealistic policy expectations. Continuing to set abstract targets and policies that apply across the board, irrespective of local government's actual resources to deliver them, is a formula for unrealistic and unmet promises that will further undermine public confidence in local government. Simplifying or streamlining regulatory frameworks, policy goals and reporting systems wherever possible would also go a long way towards making things easier for municipalities to deliver on our ambitious mandate.

Chairperson, it is 10 years since we embarked on the ideal of providing democratic local government to our people and while the local government turnaround strategy promises to address these issues, the legislature must ensure that the policy framework and proposals put forward in fact meets our constitutional imperative and is ultimately conducive to efficient service delivery. We must ensure that the next term of municipal councils coming into office, who are the delivery agents of most of government programmes, is characterised by a national and provincial government who continually provides coherent support and an enabling policy, legislative and institutional support from provincial and national government.

The legislatures must be vigilant in checking the exercise of executive power and ensuring that coherent and focused support to municipalities from the other two spheres, rather than increasing the compliance burden and interventions, become the regular order of our 'cooperative' business.

In conclusion

We must consolidate the gains made to date by addressing some of the fundamental constraints hampering local government in our quest to effect development so that the third generation of councillors stepping into the fray

in 2011 and beyond have a more stable, sound and equitable policy framework to deliver on the developmental mandate and alleviate the challenges of our people. The ideal of developmental local government is still alive, but nature of the support and cooperation between spheres of government must take a different course.

Chairperson, we are committed to working with our partners in government and the sectors to ensure an integrated approach to service delivery and that the developmental vision of local government is realised. We simply cannot afford, nor do our people deserve anything less.

Through our interaction and representation of our membership, SALGA will continue to engage the national legislative process to ensure the efficacy of service delivery.

I thank you.

Hon Cllr A Masondo
SALGA