

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY, MR
KENNY MOROLONG (MP) AT THE 9th ANNUAL SALGA NATIONAL COMMUNICATORS
FORUM IN CAPE TOWN
25 FEBRUARY 2026**

***Programme Director,
The Chairperson of SALGA
SALGA National Executive Committee,
Mayors and councillors
Esteemed guests,
Local government communicators
Ladies and gentlemen,***

It is an honour and privilege for me to address you on the occasion of the SALGA National Communicators Forum. This forum more than any other is a chance for all communicators assembled here today to find ways to strengthen local government and to live up to our constitutional obligations to inform the public about the work of government.

We are mandated to communicate with the public in a way that ensures that they have the information required for them to be active agents in improving their lives and in shaping the direction of their communities and the country. To fulfil this important mandate, the three spheres of government must work together in unison, and the role of local government is central.

It is the sphere that is closest to the people and for many South Africans represents the most frequent contact with government. The fact that SALGA has a presence in all nine provinces is testament to your influence and importance in the local government landscape.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This forum takes place as the country prepares to hold the 2026 Local Government Elections at the end of this year. The year 2026 also marks 30 years since the adoption

of The Constitution and much of our work as communicators this year should be to communicate and celebrate the strides we have made in ensuring the provisions of the constitution become a lived reality. In particular, government is expected to assess the progress the current administration has made in implementing its electoral mandate as reflected in the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF).

Our mandate as communicators includes heightening communication on the work being done since 2021 LGE to prepare for the 2026 Local Government Elections, along with encouraging South Africans to register to vote, while also reminding them of the importance of the right to vote. A right which was gained on the back of selfless sacrifice by thousands of men and women.

Our work in fulfilling this important mandate must be done within the guidelines on government communication during an election period. Our work as always is to inform, educate and empower voters.

We must also inform the people of this country about the priorities of government as highlighted by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his State of the Nation Address, where he outlined the achievements of government as well as challenges that are being attended to in the three spheres of government. I challenge each communicator in this room to read the speech and unpack the content of the speech to your communities.

We must be more agile, more strategic, and more united and cohesive than ever before. We must not be found wanting or unprepared as we do our work. In our interaction with the public, we must be honest about both our successes and challenges. Our task is to anticipate pressure points before they emerge, tailor communication for diverse communities, and make sure government remains accessible and responsive.

The role of government communicators in this epoch of our democratic evolution is to ensure that the voice of government remains clear, consistent, and unambiguous — even in a complex political environment. We are also expected to involve communities on matters of local government, thus placing communication at the centre of public participation.

To reach all South Africans in their preferred platform of choice, we should use A hybrid of traditional and new media. These include both print, electronic media and digital platforms such as national portals, mobile apps and social media. Our efforts should also be informed and directed by the Government Segmentation Model (GSM) which was developed by GCIS to ensure that government messages reached their intended audience. The model assists in defining our population in terms of their demographics, information needs, perception on government performance in key priority areas and preferred channels of communications.

The Government Segmentation Model categorises the population into the following demographics, namely, Rooted Realists, City Seekers, Safely Suburban, Metro Mobiles and Cosmopolitan Capital. The model explains what each category of the population likes or where they stay, their preferred media and their information needs which are crucial to communicators and the Research unit at the GCIS head office can provide you with more details on this matter.

Mayors and councillors,

The public opinion research conducted by GCIS between 12 July to 24 August 2025 shows that more needs to be done to communicate the work of government and address the root causes of public dissatisfaction and restore confidence in the country's trajectory.

Public opinion data reveals a deepening sense of concern among South Africans regarding the direction in which the country is heading. As of August 2025, 75% of citizens believe the country is on the wrong path, reflecting a significant rise in pessimism compared to 63% in 2024. They are concerned about **unemployment (61%)** and **poor service delivery (52%)** while other key concerns include corruption, crime, and the energy crisis which has now been addressed by our government. In contrast, only 20% of respondents feel the country is moving in the right direction, while 5% remain uncertain.

Across the three spheres of government, public perception on government performance has notably declined. Public perception on the performance of National government has fluctuated dramatically since 2022, reaching a positive peak of 49% in late 2024 before a steep decline to 32% by mid-2025. Similarly, the Provincial government saw a peak of 47% before declining to 35%, following a comparable but less extreme trajectory.

Positive sentiments on local government performance have been the lowest since August 2018, sharply declining in September 2022 and fluctuating to 33% currently. Confidence in Premiers, Mayors, and Ward Councilors remain consistently low, typically in the 20-40% range, highlighting a profound public dissatisfaction with governance at the local and provincial spheres.

These findings are a concern and they should propel us to deliver compelling public service communication that supports the priorities of government and provides information that can help improve the lives of people. We must take deliberate steps to improve the two-way communications between the people and Government in order to build stronger collaboration as well as trust in both our leaders and institutions.

We should be mindful that our success in winning the minds and hearts of people lies in our interaction with the media. We must acknowledge the critical role played by the media, and in particular community media, in creating an informed citizenry. Community media has the ability to inform public discourse which is imperative in strengthening our democracy and we must build good relations with all the media.

As government we have taken the decision that communicators must support community media through advertising. This will not only transform the media but will go a long way towards creating jobs and opportunities for people living in those communities.

In conclusion,

This forum is a collective opportunity for us to once again focus on how best we can deal with community protests, which often turn violent and result in the destruction of

property. As a communicator I cannot help but think that many of these could have been averted had we simply taken the time to talk to communities.

Communities become frustrated when they are not kept updated on progress or challenges, and the result far too often is unnecessary violence and destruction of property. I believe we can help to fill this void by getting our principals to go out and speak more regularly to their constituents. Communities value openness and honesty, but cannot and will not tolerate being left in the dark. One of the more recent initiatives that many provinces and municipalities have commenced with, the “Local Government Thursday’s” Programme, is for me one of the examples of how sustained, consistent and frank communication with communities must be undertaken. I expect this forum, as you contemplate the best manner of building bridges between government and local communities, to institutionalise these Local Government Thursday’s, coordinated by the GCIS and Provincial and Local Governments using the powerful medium of community radio, as one of the opportunities which enhance accountability and build trust in our public institutions.

We should also pay attention to capacitate municipal communication staff and ensure that they understand their mandate. Being a good communicator means we should pay more attention to the message and must avoid becoming news ourselves.

Let us therefore identify our shortcomings and then be brave enough to act on them. I look forward to our deliberations today and the discussions that are sure to follow.

Lastly, I wish you well and encourage all participants to make constructive use of this important meeting of minds.

Thank you