

**Keynote address by the Executive Mayor Cllr LBR Dhlamini, on the Mayoral Gala Dinner at Town Hall Standerton.**

**30 May 2017**

- Programme Director,
- Honourable Speaker, Councillor H.M Khotha.
- Chief Whip of Council, Councillor M.L Mlaba.
- Honourable Members of the Mayoral Committee, Councillors V.T Malinga and B Mollo.
- Honourable Councillors of Lekwa Local Municipality present today.
- Leaders from various religious denominations,
- Our revered traditional leaders.
- Leaders from various religious denominations.
- Representatives from the business fraternity, labour and civil society formations.
- Municipal Manager Mr L.B. Tshabalala and the entire management team of Lekwa Local Municipality.
- Esteemed Guests and all Dignitaries present
- Residents of our Municipality at large, Compatriots, Comrades and Friends.
- Ladies and Gentlemen.
- All protocol observed.

A very warm welcome to you on this momentous evening. I feel honoured to stand before you, especially before business leaders who display determination and passion in development agenda of the people of Lekwa. Life is a continuum. Every time a challenge or an opportunity presents itself, it is time for new beginning. This is exactly my feeling at this point in time.

Let me start this speech off by quoting former President Thabo Mbeki, “The poor prey on one another because their lives offer no hope and communicate the tragic message to these human beings that they have no possibility to attain a decent standard of living”. The above statement reflects the challenges our

people face on a daily basis and we need to use today's platform to create new hope for all residents of Lekwa.

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Programme Director, thank you for the privilege to say a few words at this important occasion, Present here are a number of key stakeholders. These range from community leaders, faith-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, leaders of various political parties, people with disabilities, representatives of labour, women, and youth formations.

We owe this commitment to the people of Lekwa. They are an epitome of excellence and service to this municipality and these are the values we need to carry with us as we enter into this new era.

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We gathered here tonight towards the conclusion of Africa Month celebration. As councillors of Lekwa we have an obligation to serve all our communities with dedication and commitment and to ensure that we build a better life for all. We have a responsibility to ensure that we do not betray the ideals of Nkwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Walter Sisulu, Braam Fischer, Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Ruth First, Moses Mabhida, Moses Kotane, Oliver Reginald Tambo, Nelson Mandela and many others

Shaping Africa's future is a matter that has occupied the minds of several great African men and women for more than a century.

Programme Director allow me to quote the words of one of the founders of the ANC, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, who delivered a seminal public lecture at Columbia University in 1906 title "The Regeneration of Africa":

***"The brighter day is rising upon Africa. Already I seem to see her chains dissolved, her desert plains red with harvest, her Abyssinia and her Zululand the seats of science and religion, reflecting the glory of the rising sun from the spires of their churches and universities. Her Congo and her Gambia whitened with commerce, her crowded cities sending forth the hum of business, and all her sons employed in advancing the victories of peace - greater and more abiding than the spoils of war. Yes, the regeneration of Africa belongs to this new and powerful period! By this term regeneration I wish to be understood to mean the entrance into a new life, embracing the diverse phases of a***

*higher, complex existence. The basic factor which assures their regeneration resides in the awakened race-consciousness. This gives them a clear perception of their elemental needs and of their undeveloped powers. It therefore must lead them to the attainment of that higher and advanced standard of life”.*

It is fitting and proper that this Mayoral Gala Dinner is held during the Africa Month in the land of Pixley ka Isaka Seme, who together with many great African leaders of his generation, contemplated and agonized about the future of Africa.

As this generation of African leaders from local government and business leaders, we have a responsibility to re-imagine an Africa free from all the conceptual trappings and material legacies of our colonisers. We envision an Africa free from all divisions and petty jealousies of the past.

In his book, '*Development as Freedom*' Amartya Sen says "*Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states. Despite increases in overall opulence, the contemporary world denies elementary freedoms to vast numbers – perhaps even the majority – of people”.*

Our vision as Lekwa is to increase the active participation and partnership with business sector, because the more comprehensively we work with them as partners, the more we increase their value and contribution to the entire community.

I address you tonight to share a little story of how we in Lekwa Local Municipality are working together, with the business people, to drive our municipality development agenda. It is possible to ensure that local government can collaborate with business sector, to achieve a common vision on matters such as infrastructure development, spatial planning, human settlements and economic transformation.

When we put together and approved the business plan, one of the underlying principles that we adopted, was that we needed to plan and organize these different events in partnership with other stakeholders. This was informed by the fact that the development was not just for Lekwa, but for all the various formations and sectors that make up the municipality.

To eradicate youth unemployment, we appeal to all business leaders here tonight to make practical efforts to increase the Lekwa's employment

absorption through learnerships, internships and other forms of apprenticeships to provide experience for Lekwa's youth.

Programme, we have set ourselves a vision of Lekwa economy that plays a role as the key economic hub on the provincial and a national economic growth by ensuring sustainable shared growth that benefits all. We aim to achieve this vision through the following goals.

We also aim to realise our vision of being the key economic hub on the three provinces by achieving the following:

- Building of a local economy with strong links to the national, regional and global economies.
- The growth of a domestic market for locally produced goods and services geographic spread of economic activities.
- Continuous improvements to the general business environment to ensure the increased competitiveness of companies based in Lekwa.

In closing, Programme Director, I have no doubt that power and electricity provision is one of the talking points in our municipality as we had approached the winter months. The recent difficulties experienced by Eskom in meeting rising electricity demands have somewhat aggravated our own challenges. The municipality in partnership with SASOL will continue with its own programme to upgrade the electricity infrastructure.

Programme Director, I want to reassure the people of Lekwa that we are keenly aware of the problems and that we are working flat out to alleviate the situation and to keep power outages and related disruptions to the bare minimum.

Let me take this opportunity to assure you that we are fixing, in an ongoing way, whatever problems that are there, and that there is indeed, a bright light at the end of this tunnel.

Thank you