

Acceptance speech by the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Councillor Mpho Parks Tau

26 May 2011

Madam Speaker

Minister of Arts and Culture and Provincial Chairperson of the ANC in Gauteng: Mr Paul Mashatile

Convener of the ANC Johannesburg Region: Cde Louis Ramano and Members of RILC

The Provincial Electoral Officer: Mr Sy Mamabolo

Chief Whip

Leaders of all Political Parties

Fellow Councillors

City Manager: Mr Mavela Dlamini

Managers and Officials of Council

Distinguished Guests

Civil Society Organisations

The Media

Fellow Citizens

Ladies and Gentlemen

Please allow me, on behalf of the newly elected public representatives of Johannesburg to thank the residents of our city for their participation in the election of 18 May and the confidence they placed in us.

We are thankful for the significant turnout of voters on Election Day resulting in about 56 percentage poll. This augurs well for the future of representative democracy and accountability in our City.

At the outset I want to thank and congratulate the Independent Electoral Commission for its sterling work in organising and running the local government elections in an effective and professional manner. I trust that all councillors will join me in thanking the IEC, its board and executive, as well as the Electoral Officer of Johannesburg and all staff members for the way in which the process was conducted.

It is significant that the 18th May was the birth date of a giant of our struggle and leader of our movement – Walter Sisulu. To him and others we owe our freedom and liberty. We in the ANC are keenly aware that some of the greatest personalities in history shaped our organisation but we

equally know that their development was shaped by virtue of being members of the African National Congress.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your election to this high office. Your election is proof of the confidence that this Council has in your abilities and leadership. The Office of the Speaker is an essential element of our system of democratic local governance. It provides a continuous link between council and the electorate throughout the term of office.

Our best wishes also go to the newly elected Chief Whip of Council who will continue to play a critical role towards the effective functioning of this institution.

I also want to congratulate each and every member who has been elected as a councillor either as a ward or PR representative.

Now that the votes have been cast and counted, it is time to put our differences aside and unite in the service of the residents of our great city. Joburg deserves only the best efforts from everybody, whether they are in the political leadership, in management, in all positions within our administration and across the spectrum of our partners in business, labour, the faith-based community and civil society.

I want to express, at the outset of my tenure as Executive Mayor, my willingness to work together with all political parties and stakeholders. This will enable us to find workable solutions for the diverse range of developmental challenges facing Joburg as we move towards our vision to become a world class African City.

Joburg is the largest and most diverse city in the country and as the economic and cultural hub of our country, it plays a pivotal role in the direction our nation will grow in the future.

Over the past ten years we saw significant progress under the direction and leadership of the Executive Mayor, Clr Amos Masondo, and the successive Mayoral Committees that served our city with such distinction.

I believe that an in-depth assessment of our achievements over the past decade will reveal a remarkable record of success. Under his leadership:

We successfully created a united city from disparate administrations and councils.

We established an exemplary record of efficient and accountable administration with a strong community participation in the decision-making process.

We stabilised the city's finances and led the country in the quality of our financial reporting – moving from a qualified audit position to a report without qualifications.

We pioneered the concept of Municipal Bonds with an overwhelming positive response from the investment community to successive issuances.

Together with our partners we revitalised the Inner City, attracted new investment, significantly reduced crime levels and took strong action against urban grime and decay.

We extended the coverage of residents receiving basic services to the point where almost 95% of Joburgers now have access to quality water, reliable electricity and decent sanitation.

We launched and implemented key flagship projects that today define our city's landscape – the Nelson Mandela Bridge, Constitution Hill, Newtown, Brickfields and many more.

We introduced the first effective bus rapid transit system into the city – thus providing our residents with a safe, fast and affordable choice of transport.

We led the way in the provision of mixed housing developments such as Cosmo City and Lufhereng.

We started with an imaginative “greening of the city” campaign, planted more than 200 000 trees, provided grass to dusty soccer pitches and public spaces, and introduced the concept of Xtreme Park makeovers.

We transformed Johannesburg into a desirable destination for trade tourism and investment, a proud and successful host of major events such as the 2010 World Cup and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The list of accolades and prizes the City of Johannesburg has received, continue to bear testimony to these and other successes.

These are living monuments of the work done during your tenure. I am proud to have been a member of his team and to associate myself with his legacy and track record.

In his words, the task for the new generation of leadership will be to build on this legacy and take the achievements of the city to a higher level.

Madam Speaker,

Allow me on a personal note to thank the members and leadership of the African National Congress for the confidence they expressed in me by nominating me as its Mayoral candidate for the City of

Johannesburg. My appreciation also goes to this Council for their vote of confidence displayed through my election today.

I want to extend my thanks and appreciation to my family – especially my wife and children, mother and siblings -- for their commitment and support over the years.

Madam Speaker,

I have every intention to serve the people of Joburg guided by the vision of the ANC, to create a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa, free of the ills of the injustices of the past.

I want to give the people of Joburg the assurance that we will not let up in our efforts to help create a better Joburg through the building of better communities.

As we said in our Local Government Elections Manifesto during the election campaign, we had the opportunity of direct contact with people – in villages, townships and suburbs – receiving feedback on the progress we are making.

Together with a team of comrades in the ANC, I have spent the past few months on an open-top bus, criss-crossing this beautiful city and meeting with our remarkable citizens. Each experience has helped to enhance my own perspective on the spirit of the people of Johannesburg – a spirit that exudes confidence, a spirit that is unbreakable – regardless of the enormity of the task, a spirit that is about common humanity.

The Rand Show – the ever popular family outing for Joburg residents as well as those who visit our city over the Easter period had two attractions for me. After campaigning at the ANC stand in Hall 6 I visited the highly interactive and very visible City of Joburg display that captured the many entities and departments that touch the lives of our citizens on a daily basis.

From Joburg Water and its messaging on water conservation, to JMPD's cycling track to teach children the rules of the road; from the "Zoo to You," to Metrobus and Rea Vaya – the city display was a reminder of just how central the services we offer are to the daily lives of our citizens.

This campaign also saw us visiting historic sites - from the Hector Pieterse Memorial, to Kliptown and Lilliesleaf Farm. The experiences as recounted to us – including from some of the councillors seated in this chamber -- reminded us all that we never want to go back in time to an era of oppression, racism and prejudice. Our visit to Constitution Hill reassured us of the values enshrined

in our Constitution and the inherent guarantees it provides for the future of our freedom and democracy.

On Wednesday morning, the 11th May at 5:15, I arrived at Stretford Station in Orange Farm. It had rained the night before. I battled through the mud to traverse the area between the main road and the entrance to the station. It was dark, cold, wet and the prospect of ending up face first in the mud was very real. The train did not arrive on time – a reminder of the work that remains to be done to build a public transport system that caters to the needs of residents. It is these daily experiences of workers in our city that we need to confront and deal with.

On the campaign trail we were not confined to informal settlements or townships. We visited leafy suburbs and were well received in diverse communities. An engagement with a young white South African at one of the many pavement cafes in Parkview reminded me that there is so much work to be done to build bridges. The young lady lamented that she could not make an informed choice in the local government elections because she did not feel that she really understood the ANC and other political parties and our respective policies.

The reception from what is known as the HIP alliance – the Hellenic, Italian and Portuguese community and their genuine desire to build a better Johannesburg and a better South Africa was truly uplifting. A range of new immigrant communities – from people of Turkish, Chinese and Somali backgrounds – all expressing a desire to bring their skills, their expertise and their passion to bear on addressing challenges of job creation, poverty alleviation and social inclusion in this diverse and cosmopolitan city. A Somali migrant told me that his wife is a qualified nurse but unable to find employment, even as a volunteer in the city.

I realized how much we take for granted when we visited Mandela Square to listen to the excellent rendition of Handel's Messiah. It became evident how few of the members of our delegation of ANC volunteers have visited our beloved Mandela Square which is frequented by visitors from far and wide across the world.

Spending time with young people, on a tour of Soweto TV or at the finale of Dreamgirls or on YFM was a reminder of the increasingly young population of a rapidly growing city and the need to build a city of the future.

An interaction with Design Professionals at "The Love Revolution" in Melville exposed me to young urban designers who are brand ambassadors for this city and this country. They have succeeded in bringing editors-in-chief of a host of international design publications to Johannesburg and urged us to continue to leverage off the eagerness internationally to learn more about our beautiful city – more so after the hosting of the 2010 World Cup.

The campaign culminated in an interfaith tour and interfaith prayer service. From the Hindu temple in Marlboro, to worship under a tree in Doornfontein, to the St. Aidan's Anglican Church, to the Sultan Bahu Mosque in Mayfair - faith based and political leaders were united in their view that the City of Johannesburg, with its diversity of people, its diversity of languages and its diversity of faiths – has a lot of bridges to build. Not just the double decker bridge on the M1 or a pedestrian bridge that remains on the IDP request list of a community - but the bridges between people, their respective cultures and faith.

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Madam Speaker

None of us in this Council underestimates the enormous developmental challenges facing Johannesburg. In many instances the issues that confront us are similar to that which is on the agenda of any large urban environment – from Toronto to Tokyo, from Rio de Janeiro to Beijing.

I want to give you the assurance that we are well aware of the issues that need to be addressed. We will continue with our turnaround of the City's billing system and ensure that we realise the benefits of a modernised system that provide our residents with a single entry point into all city services.

We will continue with the process to refurbish and replace our infrastructure network and ensure that all residents have access to quality water, reliable electricity and decent sanitation.

We will address the quality of our roads, fix the potholes, repair broken traffic lights and clean out culverts and storm water drains. We will continue to extend our bus rapid transit system to ensure that our communities have access to safe, affordable and reliable public transport. We will address environmental concerns – and, together with other spheres of government and the private sector, find solutions for pressing issues such as acid mine drainage.

We will redouble our efforts to improve the quality of interaction with our residents and clients – whether it is at the call-centres, or at council offices. We will do so in the spirit of Batho Pele and both management and staff will be aware of the fact that they will be held accountable for the quality of their service delivery.

All of this will be done within the context of fiscal responsibility and according to the high standards of prudent financial management we have set ourselves. We successfully weathered the storm of the deepest economic recession in recent history, coupled with the high expenditure required towards the World Cup. We are now poised to move the City on to a new developmental growth path.

However, Madam Speaker, I want to emphasise the point that our City, Joburg, is more than tarmac and concrete, and more than wire and pipes. It is also about socio-economic development and transformation.

Our primary focus will remain firmly fixed on human development and on improving the quality of life of our people across all regions and all communities.

We received a firm and unambiguous mandate from the people of Joburg to proceed on the road of developmental local governance.

The process of transformation of our City's landscape is on track, it is our commitment to continue along this road of changing the spatial structure of a divided city of the past.

You should expect this administration to focus very strongly and introduce measures and programmes to address issues of social exclusion and underdevelopment.

Thus we continue to pay special attention to programmes that alleviate endemic poverty, widen the net of our expanded social package, address issues related to child-headed households, and people living with and affected by HIV and Aids.

We will increase our efforts to create a sustainable environment in a period when our natural resources, in terms of water and electricity provision, will be under increasing strains. We simply cannot continue with the reckless wastage of such resources and the City will have to expand our demand side management measures to ensure that we leave a sustainable legacy for future generations.

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Madam Speaker,

While we will continue building on the legacy of success of the past decade it is equally true that a changing environment requires a fresh look at the interventions we are implementing.

The principles that underpin our Growth and Development Strategy, adopted in 2006, are the main cornerstones of our developmental vision and stance.

Allow me to remind Council of the six principles contained in the GDS:

The City must find solutions to enable the pro-active absorption of the poor, as it will remain a magnet for the poor seeking a better life;

It must ensure balanced and shared growth and break down the divide between the "first" and "second" economies;

It must facilitate social mobility and equality and meet its obligations to serve the poor better;

Since the City has been transformed in institutional terms over the past 10 years, it is now time to accelerate its transformation in spatial terms;

It must ensure it becomes a more sustainable city by anticipating and managing the effects of environmental change; and

The City recognises that it cannot deal with the challenges it faces alone and it needs to find new ways of working across the traditional public-private divide and across boundaries that separate it from its neighbours.



These issues remain very relevant to this day, but I believe the time has come for us to have a fresh look at the GDS to ensure that its objectives and guidelines still meet the needs of a dynamic urban environment.

This will be an inclusive process in which we intend to involve all communities and stakeholders to enable us to redefine our priorities across the entire spectrum of city activities and programmes.

The process will culminate in a city-wide Stakeholder Summit later this year where the outlines of a revised GDS will be discussed and adopted.

In the next few weeks the incoming Mayoral Committee will undertake a process of translating our commitments into concrete plans of action. This will also be reflected in the City's Budget for the 2011/2012 financial year.

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Madam Speaker,

I am a humbled and honoured to serve this great city of Johannesburg into this exciting new era, this as we enter the second decade of the 21st Century.

The City of Johannesburg is poised for an exciting new chapter in its history. We as elected representatives are presented with the opportunity to help shape the future of our city.

I am confident that we will be up to this task and that we will not disappoint the trust placed in us by the people of Joburg.

The time has come for Council, the new Mayoral Committee and each and every employee of Joburg to roll up their sleeves and dedicate themselves to the task at hand. The people of Joburg deserve this from all of us.

Thank you

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