

Announcement of the Joburg Soweto Tennis Open

18 March 2009

Statement by the executive mayor of Johannesburg, Councillor Amos Masondo, at the media briefing on the occasion of the announcement of the Joburg Soweto tennis open scheduled to take place from 13th april to 3rd may 2009, Arthur Ashe centre, Jabavu, soweto, Johannesburg

Programme Director

MMC for Community Development: Cllr Nandi Mayathula-Khoza .

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Chairperson of section 79 Committee: Cllr Waya Zondi

Fellow Councillors

President of the South African Tennis Association, Mr Johann Koorts

CEO of South African Tennis Association: Mr Ian Smith

Managers and Officials of Council

The Media

Distinguished guests

Programme Director, as we gather here today, it is eighty nine (89) days to the Confederation Cup and a mere four hundred and forty nine (449) days before the first ball will be kicked in the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The City of Johannesburg has on many occasions successfully hosted a number of international sporting events. These include amongst others the following: The Rugby World Cup, the Cricket World Cup, the All-Africa Games, numerous international athletics meetings, world and continental competitions and earlier this year, the A 1 Grand Prix.

Programme Director, it is an honour and a privilege for me to announce that the City of Johannesburg has been awarded the rights to host the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) Tournament. This international tennis tournament has been named: "Soweto Open 2009" and will be hosted at the Arthur Ashe Tennis Complex, Jabavu in Soweto, from 13 April until 03 May 2009.

This tournament is the first of its kind to be hosted in a historically disadvantaged community. It is meant to attract at least two thousand (2000) spectators and thirty two (32) professional tennis players from all over the world, both male and female.

The male tournament will be held from 13th to 19th April 2009, whilst the female tournament will take place on 27th April to 3rd May 2009. The tournament will be broadcast world wide to a viewership of approximately twenty million (20 000 000).

Programme Director, the City of Johannesburg takes pride in hosting a sporting event of this magnitude. This is an investment that will provide a platform for us to introduce the youth to tennis as a sporting code, promote Soweto as a place not only where people come from but a geographic location of interest, enhance social cohesion, expose the local people to international talent and experience, promote Gauteng and Johannesburg as a cultural and sports destination of choice and explore possibilities of enhancing local economic development.

During this tournament, coaching clinics targeting hundred and forty (140) children across the city will be conducted by local and international coaches and players. This will lay a basis for the further identification and nurturing of talent. This will enable us to introduce these young people to professional tennis and relevant associations. Every success we register makes us proud and help to restores our dignity as a people and a nation.

Our trained accredited hawkers will be able to sell their wares and goods.

Programme Director, I am sure you will agree with me that this tournament will enable young boys and girls to come to a facility like this one to experience the benefits that are associated with sport, for example, physical fitness, discipline, fun and above all, to interact with others and build a relationship that has a potential to last a life time.

Programme Director, Orlando Stadium is just around the corner. This is an example of a facility that has changed both the skyline and the landscape of Soweto. Our interventions have sought to transform Greater Soweto from being simply a labour dormitory to a better neighbourhood. Today, we are using the pressure that come with 2010 FIFA World Cup to deepen our programmes and ensure a lasting legacy. So it is with this event.

Programme Director, please allow me to conclude by encouraging the private sector and local business to support this initiative.

We also want to thank the International Tennis Federation (ITF), the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) and South African Tennis Association (SAT A) as well as the sponsors for making this a reality.

Programme Director, our appreciation also goes to The Sponsorship Company, the agency that we have appointed to source sponsorship and manage the event.

I would also like to make a call to the community and the media to join forces with us in welcoming our fellow visitors who will be arriving in our City in a unique Joburg style. Let's provide entertainment and demonstrate the warmth that is associated with the continent of Africa.

We are looking forward to a successful Soweto Open 2009.

Thank you