

Arbor Day speech

01 September 2007

SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF JOHANNESBURG, CLR AMOS MASONDO, AT ARBOR DAY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FOOD AND TREES FOR AFRICA AND 702 TALK RADIO, DOROTHY NYEMBE PARK, DOBSONVILLE, SOWETO: JOHANNESBURG

Programme Director – Aki Anastasio

MMC for Environment: Clr Prema Naidoo

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Fellow Councillors

Johannesburg City Parks Chairperson, Mr Griffiths Zabala

Ms Winnie Madikizela-Mandela

Baby Jake Matlala

702 Managing Director: Ms Pheladi Gwangwa

Food and Trees for Africa CEO: Ms Jeunesse Park

Mr Jodi Scheckter (former Formula 1 driver and donor)

Partners and sponsors

Managers and Officials of Council

Distinguished Guests

The Community of the Greater Dobsonville area

The Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, it is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to share this day with you and be part of this very important event – to be part of a programme that seeks to add value by greening of the South.

This meeting is taking place on Arbor Day. Today we welcome spring and together pledge to advance the course of sustainable development.

The City of Johannesburg has a vision, to build Johannesburg into a World Class African City. We want to build a City that is very different from the divided City of the past. A City that is able to provide decent accommodation, excellent services, safer communities, access to participatory governance and communities where people live in sustainable neighbourhoods and vibrant urban spaces.

We therefore continue in this City to address numerous complex challenges that include urbanisation and migration, growing the economy and ensuring job creation, service delivery and the negative impacts of globalisation.

We cannot succeed in building Johannesburg into a World Class African City for all if we do not address the need for this City to become environmentally sustainable. What we need is a City with a sustainable green landscape especially in the South. In contrast, the northern parts of Johannesburg when looked at from outer space resembles a rain forest. The South on the other hand is denuded and dusty. This situation must be reversed.

We aim to do the following:

- To plant more than 200 000 trees before 2010;
- To green every soccer field in every township;
- To build more regional parks especially in the South;
- To establish nurseries and ensure that these help to reinforce our greening programme.
- To clean and green the Klipriver and all its tributaries by 2010;
- To leverage private sector resources and partner with many organisations to realise the goals that we have set for ourselves.

What have we done to date?

- On the 1st of September 2006, we were able to plant 2400 trees.
- From July 2006 to June 2007, the City planted more than 30 000 trees.
- We have secured the support of many partners who are willing to, together with us, travel the journey to make the City of Johannesburg green, safe and clean.
- Together with communities we continue to engage in projects and programmes that seek to enhance our environment.

We would like to see the private sector, organisations of civil society, the community at large and government continuing to work together in partnership. In this City we have said, over and over again, that government working alone and in isolation will never adequately address all the complex challenges that face us.

Programme Director, we will do well to remind ourselves that from 24th August to 03rd September 2002, the prominent personalities and leaders of the world descended on and converged in the City of Johannesburg.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development sought to save the planet and ensure a lasting benefit to future generations. We were part of the global commitments that were made at this summit and we have a responsibility to do our part and make a contribution towards sustainable development.

In his Arbor Day message of 1907, Theodore Roosevelt said: *"It is well that you should celebrate your Arbor Day thoughtfully, for within your lifetime the nation's need of trees will become serious. We of an older generation can get along with what we have, though with growing hardship; but in your full manhood and womanhood you will want what nature once so bountifully supplied us, not for what we have used, but for what we have wasted"*.

Programme Director, please allow me to thank all the various sponsors and supporters of this programme. I hope to see these faces and more trees not only on Arbor Day 2008 but as we implement and intensify our programme.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone present here today. Your contribution and participation is fully appreciated.

Thank you.