

Children's Council and GDS Competition Awards Ceremony

22 November 2011

Keynote Address by Madame Speaker of the City of Joburg, Councillor Conny Bontle Bapela, on the occasion of the Children's Council and GDS Competition Awards Ceremony held at the Sci Bono Auditorium, Newtown

Greetings:

Children Councillors, Members of the PPPC, Principals, Parents and Members of the Media.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you today as we reach the summit of all our efforts. We have reached that summit as the end of term of the current Children's Council has arrived and all the energies invested in the GDS Competition finally yield results and are soon to be rewarded. It is that moment when all the anxieties and the waiting finally find an exit and one may breathe a sigh of relief.

To the outgoing Councillors, I would like thank all of you for the long relationship that we have developed over the period of your tenure. I am certain that it has been an enriching experience and many of you would welcome another chance to serve another term. Some of you are at the point where you can graduate to be eligible for the Student Council. The initiative of a Children's Council and Student Council is a project driven by the City of Johannesburg's Stakeholder Relations Management Directorate, through the Civic and Citizenship sub-directorate.

We hope to expose young minds to the governance experience and greater interface and involvement with communities and begin to appreciate the challenges that public representatives come across. This exposure is an educational experience that not so many children will get and the opportunities that you had, I hope, were fully embraced. We are equally honoured to have shared a working relationship with young spirits like you over your tenure. I trust that we all had fun and it is a lifetime experience that we all shall carry into the future and as you grow up, you'll discover that you have an edge over all other children.

The past three years since the launch of the Children's Council back in 2008 have also being a learning experience for the city. I would like to urge parents to open their minds to the possibility and reality that we all can learn one thing or the other from our children. The passion that they ooze can be very affective and infectious. It's the energy that also challenges us physically, emotionally and intellectually. I appeal to all parents to nurture the enquiring, passionate and energetic spirit and minds of our young ones and expand the horizon for the release of their potential to be creative, innovative and productive. We need to value our children and guide them sensitively and show them great love to harvest great humanity in them. We all need to play our part in the socialisation and upbringing of our children – from our homes, our playgrounds, our schools, our communities and through partnership, we can harvest great leaders from our children and be assured that the future of this city and our country is in good hands.

I would like to thank all the parents who released their children to participate in the Children's Council and the GDS Schools Competition. I thank you for trusting us to be engaged with your children and providing the support and encouragement that have kept

them resilient up to this moment. We have started another round of the democratic process of inviting schools to participate in this program. We soon will be processing applications and also running elections to assent the new Children's Council. We hope to involve the IEC in the Children's Council elections as we value their importance. I thank all the schools that have made this project possible and invite more schools to take an interest, and special thanks also go the Gauteng Department of Education for their support. We hope to engage further with the Department of Education to explore possibilities of integrating this project as part of the school curriculum. We also would in the future consider expanding the participation in both the Children's Council and Student Council to extend to their interface with wards and ward committees. I thank all those who continue to give us the reason to do what we do and apply our minds to try and improve our work.

We also gather here to award excellence in the area of the Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) Schools Competition. The City of Johannesburg has since 2006 engaged in the development of the GDS. The GDS 2040 is long-term visionary outlook of the City of Joburg to harness all our resources, efforts and energies towards realising a "World Class African City of the Future – a vibrant, equitable African city, strengthened through its diversity; a city that provides real quality of life; a city that provides sustainability for all its citizens; a resilient and adaptive society."

We assemble here today to honour those who designed and executed exciting and interesting projects around the GDS vision. All the parents must pride themselves in the creativity that our children have demonstrated, and I'm almost certain that many of them are levels paralleled by institutions like the National School of Arts and other prestigious higher education institutions. Their progression to university and other institutions will be with little effort. I hope that I speak on behalf of all parents here when I say Congratulations to a competition well run and we are proud of all the winners. Those who participated are all winners and their recognition will only materialise when they do even better next time.

We gather here on the eve of World AIDS Day, within the 16 Days of Activism Against Women and Children Abuse and at the time when our country is hosting a global 17th Conference of Parties (COP 17) and 7th Meeting of Partners (MOP 7) in the city of EThekweni, Durban. All these events should serve as an important life-skills educational lesson to the children and parents alike. We need to put the brakes on the ever-growing rate of HIV infections and build an HIV-free generation – a society where our kids will only learn about this dreadful virus but never to experience its harsh consequences.

All of us should treasure the women of our country who are our mothers, our sisters, our nieces, our friends, our colleagues, our fellow learners and students, a pride of our society that makes this world complete. We therefore need to develop our emotional intelligence and maturity and be more sensitive and caring towards our women. Failure to control our emotions and direct our judgement is a sign of weakness that surely will spoil your future. We also need to protect, love and guide our children and not betray the trust they invest in us by being abusive. Our elderly are also a heritage of society – a source of wisdom and knowledge and need to be treated with great care and love. We should all say: No to Women, Children and Elderly Abuse!

Let us all play our part in reducing the levels of emission that our actions contribute in harming the environment. The little things like; recycling, reusing, reducing, saving electricity and water, using less of our vehicles, planting trees, saving and protecting our

wetlands, etc. can go a long way towards making a significant contribution in helping to moderate the abnormal climate changes we experience today. We all owe it to ourselves, our children and future generations and the nicest thing is that we all can do something and let's play our part. We pray that COP 17 & MOP 7 that is taking place in Durban will yield the desired results of ensuring that there is binding agreement by all parties and commitment of funds, especially from developed nations towards efforts to reverse climate changes.

Finally, as the City of Johannesburg, we will be hosting the Children's Parliament next year, 2012. This will be a platform for all the representatives of our children to debate critical issues that affect them and have a direct bearing on their future. We look forward to that exciting moment, and we take this very serious and all issues emerging from such engagement will be factored in our plans as far as possible.

I thank you all, and not forgetting the Stakeholder Relations Management Directorate Team, especially the Civic and Citizenship sub-directorate who worked tirelessly to make this event possible. We are all a team and once more, thank you all.