

IASP World Conference on Science and Technology

15 September 2008

**Speech by the executive mayor of Johannesburg, Councillor Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the cocktail dinner of the IASP World Conference on Science and Technology Parks, Sophiatown Bar, Newtown – Johannesburg**

Programme Director

Acting CEO of The Innovation Hub: Tsietsi Maleho

IASP Executive Board Member: Mr Esteban Cassin

IASP Board Members

Distinguished Guests

Conference delegates

Ladies and Gentleman

Programme director, on behalf of the Council, the residents and citizens of Johannesburg, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of you to the City of Johannesburg.

We are grateful that the XXV (25th) IASP World Conference 2008 is being held in our city. We also note with a sense of appreciation that this is the first time that the IASP World Conference is held on the African continent. It could have been held anywhere on the globe.

The City of Johannesburg is proud to be associated with an organisation which has as its objectives, amongst others:

- To assist with the development of new Science and Technology Parks,
- To encourage partnerships; and
- To foster international networking amongst (its) members.

Your conference theme, "The role of science parks in accelerating knowledge economy growth - contrasts between emerging and more developed economies", resonates with some of the work we are doing in the City of Johannesburg. We see ourselves as a learning organisation that is forever searching for best practice, not to copy what the others do, but seek to adopt such best practice to our own specific Johannesburg reality.

Programme director, we come from a past that was characterised by, amongst others, institutionalised racism, bad governance, oppression and extreme forms of exploitation.

The work that we do in this municipality is informed by the unshaken commitment to implement ideas that seek to ensure a fundamental transformation of our society. At the centre of these changes is the need to improve the quality of life of our citizens. To ensure that this becomes a reality we know that we need to do the following:

- Ordinary South Africans and Johannesburg citizens must have a greater say in matters that affect their lives. The masses of our people should always be understood as their own liberators. This includes a strong participatory process led by elected public representatives, supported by ward committees and other organisations of civil society;
- Ordinary people should progressively have access to basic services;

- We also need to deepen democracy at a local level by building strong governance institutions that are people oriented and sustainable.

Programme director, we see our municipal council as our local legislature. It is an important platform to consider and debate the bread and butter issues and day-to-day matters that affect every local citizen and resident. We are the elected public representatives. We are accountable to the people. We carry their dreams, hopes and aspirations.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in section 152, Act 108 of 1996, lists the objects of local government as:

- i) to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- ii) to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- iii) to promote social and economic development;
- iv) to promote a safe and healthy environment;
- v) to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of local government; and that
- vi) the municipality should strive, within its financial and administrative capacity, to achieve these afore-mentioned objects.

It is important to note that part of our legacy is constituted of the following:

- Joburg is South Africa's largest and wealthiest City;
- It account for 16% of the country's GDP;
- It is located in Gauteng, the most developed and wealthy province;
- It is the headquarters to and host the nation's largest corporations, financial institutions, media houses, law firms, the Johannesburg Security Exchange and many other organisations;
- Official population statistics stands at 3,8 million (people); and
- Affluent (mainly whites) live mainly in the "leafy" suburbs to the north and more than 70% of the poor (mainly African) live in the urban townships to the south and on the periphery of the north.

One of the negative experiences of the mid 1990s is the fact that the City experienced a financial crisis. It failed to pay its creditors for three (3) months and its actual capital expenditure was R309 million in the financial year 1998/1999.

This financial crisis was as a result of a number of factors working together in a vicious cycle each reinforcing the other. These range from: unrealistic capital budgets, taking on additional responsibilities without additional revenue, fragmented revenue and expenditure arrangements, non-payment of rates and services and lack of proper focus.

Today our capital budget is more than R1-billion. Our budget for this financial year is R26-billion.

Not many in the late 1990s, would have predicted this remarkable turnaround. Today we can say with much confidence that our institutions are much stronger and our financial position is sound.

Like many cities in the world Joburg is faced with similar challenges. In this regard, it is appropriate to note the slogan, "think global and act local". These challenges are:

- Rapid urbanisation and urban migration;
- Growing the economy, creating wealth as well as job opportunities;
- Service delivery;
- Globalisation and related issues;
- HIV and AIDS; and
- Urban renewal and inner city regeneration in certain countries.

One of the highlights of the year 2006 was the adoption of a Growth and Development Strategy meant to guide our thinking, our planning and our programmes over the next 20 to 30 years.

The City of Johannesburg has, since the 1st March 2006 Local Government Elections, re-committed itself to our vision: to build Johannesburg into a World-Class African City.

The vision statement says:

"In future, Johannesburg will continue to lead as South Africa's primary business City, a dynamic centre of production, innovation, trade, finance and services. This will be a City of opportunity, where the benefits of balanced economic growth will be shared in a way that enables all residents to gain access to the ladder of prosperity, and where the poor, vulnerable and the excluded will be supported out of poverty to realise upward social mobility. The result will be a more equitable and spatially integrated City, very different from the divided City of the past. In this World-Class African City for all, everyone will be able to enjoy decent accommodation, excellent services, the highest standard and safety, access to participatory governance, and quality community life in sustainable neighbourhoods and vibrant urban spaces".

Through these strategy documents, we are seeking to address the challenges of urbanisation and migration, economic development and job creation, service delivery, poverty, urban renewal and regeneration, globalisation, need for information technology and the bridging of the digital divide and other related challenges.

Ours is a developmental local government. We seek to actively use the instrument of Local Government, the municipality, to improve the quality of life of all residents and citizens.

We have always endeavoured to position Local Government as an economic role player of significance, as a sphere of government that is committed to economic development, a contributor to wealth and job creation.

In this City, innovation has become an integral part of our work. As the powerful commercial and business centre on the African continent, Johannesburg continues to attract discerning experts in different fields, investors and travellers from Europe, the Americas, Australia, Africa and Asia.

As I conclude, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thought I should mention that, we are fully aware that it would be very difficult for many amongst you, to resist the temptation to enjoy the splendour, the historic places and endless shopping prospects that the City of Johannesburg

has to offer. Please enjoy yourselves. Do come back to Africa and act as our ambassadors in your various countries and continents.

Thank you