

International Labour Organisation's 12th African Regional Conference

11 October 2011

Welcome address by the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Clr Mpho Parks Tau, on the occasion of the International Labour Organisation's 12th African Regional Conference, Sandton Convention Centre, Sandton – Johannesburg

Programme Director

Honourable Minister of Labour in South Africa: Ms Mildred Oliphant

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Labour

International Labour Organisation Director General

Delegates to the ILO African Regional Conference

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, on behalf of the residents and citizens of the City of Johannesburg, it gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to the City of Johannesburg on the occasion of the International Labour Organisation's 12th African Regional Conference.

The City of Johannesburg continues to enjoy and have an excellent relationship with some of our peers and counterparts in various parts of the continent. In large measure, this derives from a special relationship that South Africa enjoys with many of your countries. As African cities we confront similar development challenges. We continue to experience high levels of urbanisation as more and more people go to cities in search of jobs and prosperity.

In the City of Johannesburg, we are engaged in a continuous struggle to eradicate social inequalities and address the burning issues of poverty, the delivery of basic services and the creation of economic opportunities for our people. The question of decent work is one of the issues that constantly exercise our minds as a City.

Inequality and poverty remain a critical area of our focus and we intend to address this through substantial interventions of social mobility and human development programmes.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Johannesburg is currently engaged in a city-wide process to review its Growth and Development Strategy (GDS). The GDS is a comprehensive document setting out the City's medium to long term plans for the next 30 years.

Thus, over an eight-week period we have been engaging stakeholders and communities on nine key themes – liveable communities; resource sustainability; health and poverty; governance; transportation; community safety; the environment; economic growth and the "smart city".

In this process we have identified amongst various forms of deprivation in our communities, these being income and material deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation, education deprivation, and living environment deprivation. We have also identified the challenges we confront in relation to the integration of migrants and social exclusion.

For us the issues of economic growth and the creation of jobs remain paramount. In the draft Growth and Development Strategy we note that 'the formal economy has not been able to create enough jobs'. It is therefore important that that we stimulate economic growth and

provide support for the informal sector, which serves as an important source of employment in our economies.

This is evidence to the reality that as cities, we can no longer limit our work to the traditional local government functions. People look to their local representatives when they do not have decent homes, cannot access a clinic, have inadequate transportation, etc. We also have to be able to work closely with Government and other agencies in addressing the multifaceted nature of challenges our communities confront. This work requires partnerships with organisations of civil society, communities and business.

Honourable Ministers: Later this year, South Africa will host the Conference of the Parties 17th Session Climate change. As Local Government, we have to confront the reality of climate change and the impact this has on the communities we serve. The impact on us as Johannesburg is evident with the rising temperature levels and prepare for a city that in future will be hotter and wetter. Projections are that our city and the Region will also experience not only an increase in the rainy season, but also higher levels of intensity. We join those in the world who call on our leaders to use the opportunity at COP 17 to reach agreement on how as a generation, we are going to respond to the reality of climate change and the overall sustainable development agenda.

Honourable Ministers, the theme of this conference is "Empowering Africa's Peoples with Decent Work". This theme stresses the interdependence between communities and the labour market that is conducive to Investment, Economic Growth, Employment Creation and Decent work.

South Africa continues to play an important role within the ILO and has contributed to a number of ground-breaking conventions including the Decent Work for Domestic Workers Convention adopted in June 2011.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the International Labour Organisation and the international community for continuing to support us in the implementation of many of labour initiatives in our country.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your continued interest in our City.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to wish all of you fruitful deliberations and a productive Conference.

Thank you