

Presidential Banquet in honour of the 2010 FIFA Family

07 June 2010

Welcome address by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Councillor Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the Presidential Banquet in honour of the 2010 FIFA Family, Gallagher Estate – Johannesburg

Programme Director

Your Excellency: President Jacob Zuma

The Honourable Minister: Rev. Makhenkesi Stofile

The Honourable Premier: Nomvula Mokonyane

Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Members of Parliament

MECs and Members of the Provincial Legislature

Executive Mayors

FIFA President: Mr Sepp Blatter

FIFA Secretary General: Mr Jerome Valcke

FIFA Executive Committee Members

SAFA President: Mr Kirsten Nematandani

Local Organising Committee Chairperson: Dr Irvin Khoza

Local Organising Committee CEO: Mr Danny Jordaan

SAFA Officials and Local Amateur Soccer Associations

Representatives of Football Clubs

Football Players and Soccer Legends

Distinguished Guests

The Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, it is indeed both an honour and a privilege for me to welcome all of you to this special banquet.

When South Africa was awarded the honour to host the FIFA World Cup in May 2004, the countdown began. The years then turned into months; months into weeks, weeks into days; and today we are a mere three (3) days away from the biggest sporting spectacle on the globe.

The 2010 FIFA World Cup trophy is here. It has travelled from continent to continent, across countries, towns and cities. It is finally here, in South Africa, in Gauteng and in Johannesburg. This solid-gold trophy is the iconic symbol of the beautiful game in its global context.

So, when the captain of the winning team receives this Trophy on the 11th of July at Soccer City – it will be a culmination of a remarkable journey that brought South Africans from all spheres and backgrounds together, like no other sporting event has done before. The 32 teams that will be competing have managed to bring the world together and inspired unparalleled levels of excitement.

We see it in the display of the South African flag across our City and country – in offices, restaurants, shops, schools, houses, on vehicles, literally everywhere. We can feel it. It is here. The World Cup is finally with us.

Of course, we will do well to remember, that one of the reasons why we won the bid is because Nelson Mandela in person, engaged in vigorous campaigning for the country to host this biggest sporting event. Of course, we have also said over and over again that South Africa is a mere stage and the African continent, the real host. And we know that the African people across the continent will welcome and embrace every visitor with a warm embrace and a true spirit of Ubuntu and Harambee.

Thus, as we meet tonight at this banquet, surrounded by these illustrious people, we can be assured that our pride and joy is being shared by our fellow Africans in the town of Tamanrasset in the Sahara Desert, in the fishing village of Msimbati in Tanzania, in the rainforest of Gabon, in Katutura township in Windhoek in Namibia, in Mbare in Harare in Zimbabwe, in Nairobi, in Lusaka, in Lagos, and in all the townships of South Africa: Eersterivier in Mannenberg, in Walmer, Zwide and Zwelitsha in the Eastern Cape, in Eldorado Park, in Western, in Soweto, Evaton and Kagiso in Gauteng, Kwa-Mashu and Verulum in Kwa-Zulu Natal and elsewhere.

At a moment like this, we should take this opportunity to salute our legends, both those living and those who have since passed on, for playing the beautiful game of football even under the most difficult and trying conditions of apartheid South Africa.

What comes to mind are teams like: Avalon Athletics, Durban Aces, Witbank Black Aces, Blackpool, Moroka Swallows, Pimville United Brothers, Orlando Pirates, Chiefs and many others.

What also comes to mind are players like: Kalamazoo Mokone, Difference Mbanya, Chippa Moloi, Bernard Hartze known as "Dancing Shoes", Carlton Moloi, Sugar Ray Xulu, Master Pieces "Modimo Wa Bolo" Moripe, "Maria Maria" Lamula, Johnny Magwegwe Mokoena, Ndoda Venter, Dharam

Mohan, Ace Mgedeza, Blessing "Killer" Mgidi and many others. Every African country boasts of similar soccer heroes, legends and experiences.

Programme Director, please allow me to indicate that the peoples of Africa are welcoming the FIFA Family and all the world that is descending on our shores.

I would also like to take this opportunity, although my heart is with Bafana Bafana, to wish all the teams well in their endeavours – and – may the best team win.

Ke nako

Thank you