

**STATEMENT BY CLR NONCEBE MOLWELE, MMC FOR HEALTH
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EXECUTIVE
MAYOR OF THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG AT THE LAUNCH OF
METROPOLIS MEETING 2013**

14 June 2013

The Programme Director

Members of the Mayoral Committee,

City Manager, Mr Trevor Fowler,

Our Partners

Principals of schools

Members of the media

City of Joburg employees

Ladies and gentlemen

Let me first and foremost apologise for the Executive Mayor who was meant to be here today but could not due to other pressing state issues.

This is a unique opportunity for Johannesburg in a month in which we celebrate the contribution of the youth, to also reflect on the issues of food security, food resilience and the role of urban agriculture.

The broad outline of Food Resilience Project is already contained in the City's long term vision – the Joburg 2040 Growth and Development Strategy. Outcome 1 of the GDS foresees an: *“improved quality of life and development-driven resilience for all.”*

It then states that: *“the City envisages a future that presents significantly improved human and social development realities, through a targeted focus on poverty reduction, food security, development initiatives that enable self-sustainability, improved health and life expectancy, and real social inclusivity.”*

Agriculture and Food Security have been elevated to be among the Top 10 Priorities for the City during the current Mayoral Term, next to other important issues such as financial stability, the green economy, safer communities and investment growth.

Our Food Resilience Project is based on Five Pillars:

- To improve the knowledge base about hunger in the City;
- The increase public awareness and participation;
- To improve access to food;
- To provide support to urban agricultural projects; and
- To promote healthy lifestyles.

By mobilising the efforts of a wide range of stakeholders – from small entrepreneurial farmers to the large supermarket chains; and from farming cooperatives to individual households – our aim is to eliminate the scourge of hunger among our people and ensure healthy, stable and liveable communities.

And all the Joburgers including our employees, across all regions, departments and entities can make a contribution to these projects which have the potential to change the lives of thousands of our residents for the better.

Today's event is a tangible and practical example of what we want to achieve. We are launching a **seed collection campaign** as part of our announcement of the coming Metropolis Meeting where the issue of food security will be discussed in great detail by local and international participants.

Through the campaign, we are calling on all sectors of our City, our employees, the private sector, NGOs and civic society to buy vegetable seeds to donate to child-headed families, cooperatives and schools with food gardens.

In the spirit of Youth Month and the coming Mandela Day, this is indeed a project to which every man, woman and child in Johannesburg, can make a contribution. Just as the German-born American physicist and Nobel Prize winner who developed the special and general theories of relativity, Albert Einstein once said: ***"The value of a man resides in what he gives..."***. I am sure these words ring well with the caring hearts of our Johannesburg residents, who will rise to the challenge.

Even the Scripture guides us this way: ***"He (the Lord) who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest from your generosity" (2 Corinthians 9-10)***

Through pro-active interventions, the City tackles individual hunger on a day-to-day basis, providing life-saving relief to households with the direst needs.

The Joburg Market the largest fresh produce market in the world – supports the Food Bank which distributes food parcels to needy households on a regular basis sourced from the various farmers trading at the market. The distribution is done on a regular basis through NGOs benefitting at least 76 850 beneficiaries across the City.

In addition to this initiative, the city has identified 500 families including child headed households facing acute hunger challenges that have been prioritised to benefit from the delivery of food parcels at least twice a month. These families will also be tracked to document the impact.

Our key approach is not to rely on hand-outs and food parcels. We want to mobilise, train and empower individuals and households to become involved in food production and small-scale farming through which they can feed their families and support their neighbours.

Households are encouraged to establish backyard gardens where vegetables and fruit can be grown to provide for the immediate requirements of fresh produce. Surplus food grown in backyards can be sold to neighbours in the area and generate new household income that can be used to buy other food and necessities.

We are joined today by respected leaders in our education sector and other representatives from civil society. We call on schools and community centres to participate in these initiatives by starting food gardens, which can also eventually to supplement their financial resources. I want to give you the assurance that the city will provide you with the knowledge and logistical support.

The seeds that we are collecting from today and during the coming month will make massive contributions towards meeting the objectives of these programmes. I call on all participants – especially our own employees and companies– to donate generously to this worthy cause. Whilst we have our own processes for our staff, companies wishing to join our cause can from Tuesday next week log onto our website: **Joburg.org.za** and log their participation. Participating companies will be invited to present their donation to the Executive Mayor on a designated date. They will also be invited to the handing over of the donations to the beneficiaries.

Pikitup will soon be running a “food-for-waste programme” through which people will be encouraged to clear up illegal dumping spots and pick up litter from our streets, parks and public spaces. The gathered waste, delivered at processing sites, would then be exchanged for food parcels.

At least three Agri-Resource centres with three satellites are being established as a pilot programme in three regions (A,C and G) to provide prospective urban food producers with advice, support, mentoring and the necessary tools to get their small farms going. By the end of June 2013 all the city regions will have these centres established.

The Gauteng Department of Agriculture has provided four tractors to the city for this initiative. These tractors were used in Regions A and G to assist small farmers. In the next two months would be used extensively across the city to prepare the ground in identified areas for the next planting season.

This informal food supply sector will be assisted through advice, financing and access to basic supplies. The City will help to establish links between the growers of food and traders such as informal markets, vendors and neighbourhood retail shops.

These urban agriculture activities, will be supported through the packaging of land and the establishment of hub-and-spoke infrastructure linking the producers with cold storage facilities, slaughtering facilities and warehouses and bring them into the supply chain of the larger retailers and supermarkets.

As I conclude, I want to call on the people of Johannesburg – our employees, our residents, our schools, our faith-based organisations and our civic society to support this worthy cause – not only during this special activation month – but on a sustainable basis in the future.

Together, we can ensure that Joburg is at the centre of ***Caring Cities***.

I thank you.

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