

**CLOSING REMARKS TO THE NCOP LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK CONVENED
ON TUESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2020 BY THE CHIEF WHIP OF NCOP**

Hon Seiso Mohai, ANC MP

Perhaps I should begin by expressing a word of gratitude to all presenters for sterling presentations articulating the state of our municipalities, the challenges they face and bringing us closer to imagining strong and sustainable municipalities.

Convened under the theme “*Ensuring Capable and Financially Sound Municipalities*”, these presentations give an honest account of the particular challenges that confront local government and move a step further to clarify key interventions that are necessary to turn things around in our municipalities.

Local government remains a critical sphere of government placed at the cutting edge of service delivery and interface with our communities. And so better communities will be borne out of a stronger and solid local government.

The Chairperson of NCOP and veteran Local Government Specialist, Ntate Amos Masondo, did a brilliant work foregrounding our discussions coined “**Working Together to Build a Coherent Oversight Plan for Capable and Financially Sound Municipalities**”. The critical remarks he made shall go a long way in guiding discussions throughout this week and beyond.

Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma has implored us to refrain from a blanket approach which treats municipalities as if they are similar, that we need to establish a framework that deals with local and district municipalities in accordance to their particular challenges with a view to helping struggling municipalities and place them on the same level as bigger municipalities.

The President of SALGA – Clr Nkadimeng - expressed a sincere expectation that this Local Government Week provides the much needed solutions which are credible and sustainable for the benefit of both our municipalities and the communities they serve.

SALGA correctly insists that focus must be given to political governance challenges; strengthening of leadership and oversight; solidifying MPACS for greater impact and consequence management; improving regulatory framework to allow smaller and rural municipalities to attract skilled administrators for greater output; and review of the vertical allocation of resources.

Deputy Minister Masondo took us through the features of developmental state, the centrality of accountability to avoid poor financial decisions and deal with corruption. The Deputy Minister acknowledges the need to improve the funding model to help municipalities especially small and rural ones but equally expresses the necessity to work with what we have by avoid minimizing bad financial decisions. Our people demand and deserve a clean government.

The Auditor General did not only focus on the challenges that municipalities face but provides proactive interventions that need to be urgently effected to restore full functionality and efficiently of local government. Amongst he mentions;

- Encouraging municipalities to fully exploit all sources of revenue to meet their developmental objectives in servicing our communities.
- Ensuring that services are provided at levels that are affordable for our people, and improve efficiency in public spending.
- Remaining accountable to local taxpayers for the use of public funds and ensuring all windows for corruption and malpractice are closed.
- Insisting on consequence management to curb illegality and opportunist in the ways in which public funds are handled.

Hon Parks Tau Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs took us through history of local government to highlight the evolution of these sphere and appreciate the progress that the Democratic has made. Amongst other things, Deputy Minister makes a case for Parliament to give adequate support to municipalities to ensure Financial Viability; Improving intergovernmental monitoring and support; and create a conducive and enabling regulatory environment for municipalities to perform maximally.

Hon China Dodovu successfully carved out critical areas of oversight and the utility of insisting on a Parliament that is efficient and uncompromising in ensuring our people get what they deserve; a better life for all as promised. A strong and solid parliament will enable good governance and constrain bad decisions across all spheres of government.

We are happy with how discussions unfolded during this first day and hope that all other discussions during this week will speak to the issues raised and fashion out a progressive way-forward for efficient and working local government. Many thanks to the Presiding Officers – Hon Lucas and Hon Nyambi – for facilitating these discussions in a manner consistent with the spirit of this programme.

END!
