

**CLOSING REMARKS TO THE NCOP LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK ON
WEDNESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2020 BY THE CHIEF WHIP OF NCOP**

Hon Seiso Mohai, ANC MP

First and foremost, allow me to convey a special Thank You to all provinces for making the time to participate in these discussions as they have. The presentations made today are a culmination of and give context to discussions on Monday 8 September. These presentations by MECs have assisted in adding sufficient detail to the issues affecting our municipalities.

The Local Government Week is one of the high level strategic flagship programmes of the National Council of Provinces in pursuit of its constitutional mandate, namely:

“To represent the provinces in the national sphere of government in order to ensure that provincial interests are taken into account in the national sphere of government.”

Against this background and context, the NCOP Local Government Focus Week should therefore be understood as a conversation between the three spheres of government about the state, positionality and capacity of our system of local government in the national development agenda. Over the last two days, we have critically reflected on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing our local government.

Now what is becoming clear from these presentations here is that our government is faced with a critical task of urgently developing mechanisms through which to ensure integrated service delivery and implementation across all municipalities. At the core of this task is ensuring that necessary support is provided to municipalities; strengthening oversight mechanisms to promote responsible leadership; minimizing mismanagement and fighting corruption. There is universal consensus across all stakeholders represented here that the challenges faced by municipalities genuinely require all spheres of government for their resolution and that urgent interventions are needed to ameliorate the situation in municipalities.

Although municipalities face common challenges across the country, municipality-specific interventions may be necessary in some instances. In this regard, the central role of national and provincial governments in monitoring, supporting and strengthening the capacity of municipalities cannot be overemphasized. I am happy that the Minister of COGTA, Hon Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, did mention yesterday the necessity to maximally utilize Intergovernmental Monitoring and Intervention mechanism to improve the state of affairs in our municipalities.

The Auditor General equally spoke about the key risk areas that have an impact on municipalities as well as what needs to be addressed going forward to improve the performance of these municipalities. However, all these instruments are insignificant without dedicated public servants and representatives to implement them.

At the very onset, it must be acknowledged that municipalities are expected to generate revenue trading services which include among others; electricity, waste management, refuse removal, etc. However, the practical experience is that small and rural municipalities highly depend on transfers; a reality that makes them unsustainable considering the bulk of services they need to provide. The aggregate municipal consumer debt is also extremely high; this relates to the money municipalities have been unable to collect. This money could be utilized to realise a lot of change in some municipalities.

Finally, issues that require urgent attention relate to political instability and interference; disregard for supply chain legislation; abuse of conditional grants; wasteful and unauthorized expenditure; mismanagement of funds and corruption. This gives a bleak view of the capacity of our municipalities to root out maladministration and corruption. In this regard, capacity building should be considered to strengthen MPAC and ensure consequence management. This is necessary to fix non-functioning municipalities and rid them of corrupt employees. This must be occasioned by an intentional process of acquiring properly skilled professional and improving financial management. It will be impossible to implement a sustainable turnaround strategy for municipalities without first resolving these challenges.

The key question is moving beyond these conversations towards locating municipalities at the cutting edge of national development. Clearly, we have identified key challenges and strategic priorities which can guide us throughout this term. It is my humble submission that a clear action plan must be borne out of this forum for consideration and implementation by all stakeholders represented here.

In conclusion, allow me to thank all the Special Delegates, Ministers and Deputy Ministers, SALGA and permanent delegates who participated in this forum.

Thank you

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