



**Address by the Deputy Chairperson of SALGA, Mayor Sophie Molokoane-Machika, on the occasion of the Climate Change Summit held from 3 to 6 March 2009 in Midrand, Gauteng Province.**

- His Excellency, the president of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Kgalema Motlanthe
- Honourable members of the Cabinet
- The Honourable Minister for Climate and Energy in Denmark, Ms Connie Hedegaard
- Academics from across the globe
- Directors General
- Invited Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Climate change has forced itself to take center stage in the way we think about managing municipal spaces. It has imposed itself onto the development agenda. We are forced to deal with it. In some cases it has found us inadequately prepared to deal with it.

As we speak, a few kilometers from here, communities in the City of Johannesburg are dealing with the devastating effects of floods in areas such as Soweto, one of the oldest and well known townships in South Africa.

Recent events have forced us stop and consider whether as a society we are adequately dealing with the issue of climate change. We would like to argue that dealing with the issue of climate change necessitates that we act on two key fronts. These are:

- **Mitigation of the causes** – by reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and
- **Adaptation to the effects** – by adapting to the unavoidable effects of climate change.

We need to take measures to adapt to the environmental difficulties that result from the now accelerated rate of change in climatic patterns especially on the poor and vulnerable while at the same time we must take measures to reduce the extent to which humankind continues to contribute towards accelerating the rate of change in climatic patterns. We have to act with urgency on both fronts.

We believe that a lot of focus has so far tended to be on measures aimed at reducing the extent to which humankind continues to contribute towards accelerating the rate of change in climatic patterns. The early impacts of climate change have already appeared and scientists believe that further impacts are inevitable, no matter what happens to future global greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the decisions we take today about infrastructure, health, water management, agriculture, biodiversity and housing will have lasting consequences. It is therefore important to begin planning now for the impacts of climate change in the future.

We need to adapt quickly. Climate models predict that the mean air temperature over South Africa will increase with an estimated 2°C over the next century. Higher temperatures will influence, among others the rainfall patterns, even though it is still uncertain how the annual rainfall will change. As our understanding of the climate system improves, so does our ability to anticipate the likely changes in climate due to increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.

We are also told that rainfall may increase in some parts of the country, and decrease in other parts. We also understand that the impacts of climate change will often be specific to individual sectors or regions, thus making some sectors and regions more vulnerable than others.

Ladies and gentlemen, we therefore need to understand and predict the impacts of climate change in specific localities.

Under these circumstances local government and related municipal boundary areas then become strategic units for focused action. The unique features of local government – its democratic mandate, its close proximity to citizen, the services it delivers, its regulatory and planning responsibilities and its strategic role working with public, private and voluntary sector partners, and regional bodies – mean that it is strategically positioned to be in the frontline in tackling climate change. We need to utilize the sphere of government that is closest to the communities to effect decisive actions.

Over the past years, the South African local government has experienced an increase in activities aimed at reducing and limiting the impacts on

climate change and these programmes are being implemented by municipalities in partnership with various other stakeholders.

South African municipalities in particular, have been part of ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) programme, part of UCLG and UCLGA initiatives that seek to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, ensure energy efficiency and enhance urban livability.

Some cities have developed climate change mitigation and adaptation frameworks.

In June 2008, the South African municipalities converged at a conference jointly hosted by the City of Joburg and SALGA. The participants at the summit signed a declaration which, among others, committed them to the following:

1. Work with all our partners and key stakeholders in response to climate change;
2. Accelerate the implementation of the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol;
3. Advocate for regulatory and policy framework refinements relating to issues of migration and urbanization;
4. Mainstream climate change issues in the municipalities' Integrated Development Plans and land use management programs;
5. Build stakeholder capacity by intensified awareness campaigns and educational programmes;
6. Develop local climate change response plans, with targets and time-frames. These would include measures relating to reduction

of greenhouse gasses (GHG's) and adaptation to climate change, by means of energy efficiency, travel and transportation, water resource management, waste generation management and disposal, land use planning and management, procurement of goods and services, and improved public awareness;

In December 2008 organized local government launched an energy efficiency campaign as part of the broader campaign led by Deputy President.

In some cases these initiatives will require some specialized central capacity that will be available to assist municipalities, especially the smaller ones. Examples of how this capacity could be utilized include provision of support in analyzing patterns of climate change and developing response strategies at a local level.

SALGA is also involved in an initiative aimed at establishing institutional capacity to assist municipalities to participate in carbon credits trade processes in terms of the Kyoto Protocol. The project aims to set up a Carbon Credit Aggregation sellers' pool to assist overcome implementation and funding barriers and most importantly to give municipalities negotiating muscle in the international carbon trading markets.

Climate change will be a focal point of deliberations at the SALGA National Member's Assembly to be held at the end of May 2009. At this conference local government will assess progress made since the Joburg Local Government Climate Change Summit. It will also assess the relevance of the local government climate change agenda in the light of outcomes of this

conference and the coming Renewable Energy Conference. The conference will also explore options of strengthening the voice of South African local government as we prepare for the COP 15.

We are looking forward to fruitful deliberations at this conference and I express a hope that the outcomes will help us respond appropriately to the challenge of climate change.

I thank you.