



JOINT SITTING DEBATE ON THE OCCASION OF
THE PRESIDENT'S OPENING OF PARLIAMENT
ADDRESS – THE 7TH ADMINISTRATION

19 JULY 2024

Cllr. B C Stofile
SALGA President

***“A DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT THAT MEETS THE
BASIC NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES THROUGH ENHANCING
CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT POLICY”***

Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Thoko Didiza;
Chairperson of the NCOP, Hon. Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane;
His Excellency; President Cyril Ramaphosa;
His Excellency; Deputy President Paul Mashatile;
Honourable Premiers of our 9 Provinces;
Honourable Members

I speak here on behalf of the fraternity of local government, cognizant of the increased expectation, by local communities of the role of the local arm of state, in making a meaningful impact on development.

It is indeed my honour and humbling privilege to, on behalf of the collective leadership of local government, congratulate and welcome the newly appointed leaders of the 7th Parliament and Administration. SALGA stands proud to associate with leaders, many of whom have been drawn from the local government sphere, to serve the people of South Africa. Your election to the provincial and national spheres of government, is testament to the rich source of supply afforded by local government, to equip public representatives to deliver high-quality leadership.

The appointment of public representatives who served and come from the ranks of SALGA and municipalities, augurs well for the

realisation of a transformative and developmental provincial and national government, to meet and improve the social and economic needs of our people. SALGA is confident that your collective experiences and expertise, will enable you to deliver on your mandate.

Madame Speaker,

We appreciate the foundation laid by the former leadership of SALGA. As a result of their dedication and commitment towards influencing the local and international agenda, they have not only placed the plight of municipalities locally, but this has been extended to all local governments in the African continent and the world at large. We sincerely hope that their new responsibilities, will allow them to continue contributing to the transformation of local government.

Madame Speaker,

Let me get to the essence of our contribution today. His Excellency, President Ramaphosa's Address, on the occasion of the Opening of Parliament, was an honest reflection on what needs to be done. The tone of President Ramaphosa's address, is in tune with the intent of Nelson Mandela International Day in honour of our former President Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela!

Allow me therefore, to join many that spoke before me, by not only paying homage to our global icon of peace, human rights, and struggle for social justice, democracy and economic emancipation, but more so, to inspire all of us to take action to help change our country for the better, and in so doing build a movement for the good of the people of South Africa.

Madame Speaker,

It is within this context, that we would like to remind this Joint Sitting that the Constitution of the Republic, as championed by Madiba, entrenches local government as a fully-fledged sphere of government, in a system of cooperative governance in which the three spheres are distinctive, yet interrelated and interdependent.

President Mandela in his address to the Inaugural Conference of SALGA, in November 1996 said:-

“You have the task of doing whatever is necessary to ensure that our new local government system serves the needs of our communities. You have the responsibility to make their voice heard and to provide an effective instrument for them to improve their lives”.

It is against this backdrop, that we proudly join His Excellency, President Ramaphosa in calling on this 7th Administration, to ensure that all spheres of government supports local government, as the sphere closest to the people and site of

implementation. This request is in line with our belief, that in order to achieve a state that is capable of playing a developmental and transformative role, if we are serious about reversing the legacy of apartheid, local government is strategically positioned and a key pillar, to play a fundamental role in building a capable state.

We agree with His Excellency, President Ramaphosa that the role of municipalities, and in particular our Cities, given their importance as engines for economic growth and job creation, in transforming the 'space economy' and reversing our spatial legacy, is key. We do want to, however, add that this should come with a particular focus and reflection on the powers and functions necessary, to execute that mandate, and why devolution and assignment, is critical to the management of integrated spaces.

Honourable President, in respect of exploring opportunities for stimulating rural development as detailed in your Address, local government can play a meaningful role in the implementation of effective and innovative development programmes. We therefore have high expectations that this 7th Administration, will find ways to reinforce, rather than undermine, the role of developmental local government so that municipalities can address poverty and inequality, by developing rural communities.

Having said this, while focusing our discussions on the necessary ingredients for building a capable and developmental state, we should not, and cannot, ignore current topical issues confronting the local government sector.

Madame Speaker,

Whilst admirable progress has been made, substantial work remains to be done during this 7th Administration. Frustration with the continuing lack of fundamental economic transformation and inequality are real. The 7th Administration must therefore address the stubborn challenges that continue to bedevil local government's progress. These include: -

1. Governance and oversight challenges, including strengthening community involvement and ownership of development in municipalities.
2. Integrated development and safe, inclusive human settlements, in particular dealing with the key levers required to enable local government to effectively transform our municipal spaces and direct development.
3. Confronting our energy and infrastructural challenges and making long-term sustainable choices.
4. Intergovernmental debt and rising consumer indebtedness, as well as the declining revenue base of municipalities; and

5. Linked thereto, the viability and long-term financial sustainability of the sector, and
6. Safety and security of Councillors, Municipal officials, Traditional leaders and people that are representing the interests of communities.

We support the President's emphasis on cooperative governance. It is our respectful submission, as SALGA, that the promulgation of the Intergovernmental Monitoring, Support and Interventions Bill, which is currently a subject of consultation, would create a standardized framework of support to the municipalities and thus eliminate subjective political factors being used to justify Section 139 interventions. More so, the Bill will introduce early warning systems that will enable appropriate and relevant support from national and provincial governments to local government. This we must highlight, as part of the work of this 7th Administration, to ensure that the institutional integrity of local government is not only preserved but strengthened to expedite our developmental mandate.

Madame Speaker,

As I conclude, noting the detail unpacked by His Excellency, President Ramaphosa in his address, the journey of local government in South Africa has been an imperfect transition. We

stand proud to support the commitments made by President Ramaphosa. We must, however, stay the course on policy

choices and see to their effective execution for the best interest of the people of South Africa.

I thank you.