

**LAUNCH OF THE CLEANEST TOWN COMPETITION**

**ADDRESS BY MEC NEO MASITHELA**

**DATE: 03 JUNE 2008**

**VENUE: REFENGGOTSO COMMUNITY HALL**

Program Director

Executive Mayor Councillor Ramokhoase

All Other Executive Mayors Present

Councilors Present

Members of the media

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Programme director allow me to start this speech by acknowledging that we are gathered here today at the break of a very special month in the political history of this country. June month has been and remains a very special time and feature in this government's programme of action.

Not only is June month, youth month but it is also designated environment month. It is therefore no coincident that we launch this important programme during this month. We launch the Cleanest Town Competition at Refengkgotso because we expect youth to play a critical role to ensure a healthy and sustainable environment.

It is through projects such as the “Youth and Environment Summit” that we build synergy between government departments, various youth institutions, the public and the private sector towards youth development and Youth Service Programmes.

Together with the youth, we must solve the problem of the colour line, and unite in action to eradicate racism, sexism, xenophobic attacks and all other forms of discrimination in our country.

Programme Director, I think it only proper to start my address today by sketching a clear background of this intervention and what do we as the people of South Africa hope to achieve with it.

The competition is founded on the principles of the Polokwane Declaration which targets to reduce waste generation and disposal by 50% and 25% respectively by 2012 and develop a plan for Zero WASTE by 2022.

My department has participated in the CTC since 2002 subsequent to its launch in 2001, by the then Minister of Environment, Mr. Vali Moosa. Although the name refers to the cleanest ‘town’ the aim of the project is to identify and acknowledge the cleanest municipality and to raise awareness on appropriate and effective waste management practices.

Though there are objectives involved in the whole process, Programme Director it is critical to indicate that the cleanest municipality awards will contribute towards:

- The maintenance of a cleaner and healthier environment by recognizing municipalities that are exceptionally clean

- Job creation and income generation for unemployed people by recycling waste products
- The enhancement of South Africa`s image to foreigners and therefore contributing towards tourism growth
- Creating awareness and educating the public on concepts of waste management
- Reduce expenditure on waste and litter collection by municipalities

Our theme for this year`s campaign is “ ....removing Free State From the waste sick bed”. To achieve this objective, we need to pay attention to the following important aspects;

- Creating clean living spaces by inspiring communities to clean-up, fix up and conserve their environment
- Changing attitudes by raising awareness and educating our nation on good waste management practices
- Encouraging local municipalities and their communities to take part in the minimization of waste in their towns and townships
- Encouraging and ensuring sustainable development by creating job opportunities through the practice of appropriate and effective waste management programme
- Supporting local municipalities in their waste management practices by building capacity and offering financial support.

Program Director, as a result of the success of this intervention in the past, we have decided to introduce a new format. To this end, all 20 local municipalities and 5 district municipalities will take part in this intervention this time around.

Identifying the need to enhance this intervention, at the awards ceremony of the Cleanest Town Competition which was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007, we R 1 million towards assisting municipalities in ensuring clean and healthy living conditions for our people. This has culminated in a revised approach towards the competition which has responsibilities to all of us, from government, NGOs, business and the general community. The emphasis of this approach is to initiate programmes that can be sustained and hence continue not to exist but to grow and contribute to the betterment of the quality of all people in the Free State.

Despite these successes and the support shown by municipalities through the years, there is a need for continual growth and improvement as we progress with the competition.

Something that still needs to be improved upon however, is the support given to the municipality as they are expected to perform at the same standard whereas some do not have adequate budgetary support for waste management.

It is therefore imperative that this issue be a priority for local councils. I just want to emphasize that it shouldn't be just an event for municipalities but should rather become an ongoing campaign to clean up our province.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would be failing in my duties if I do not use this platform to applaud all those municipalities who have made an effort to improve environmental management within their respective areas. I urge you to continue to strive for improvement, and I'm sure you will be rewarded for your efforts. Cash awards are made to the provincial winners

and to those municipalities who are recognized for innovation in specific waste management practices.

These funds are to be spent on poverty alleviation programmes pertaining to waste management practice in their areas of jurisdiction. Our department will ensure that the funds are spent for the purpose they are meant for.

As this is our fifth year running this competition, there was a need to re-evaluate and assess the extent to which we had achieved our objectives. The DTEEA observed the following areas that need to be improved on;

- Project visibility throughout the year: Over the years the project only becomes visible during the evaluation period, where vigorous cleaning campaigns are undertaken.
- Diversity in participation: Participation in the competition has for most municipalities been limited to municipalities excluding the broader community as well as other key stakeholders such as schools, the health sector as well as business community.

In assessing the situation we identified four problem areas which hinder progress in waste management, namely, historic imbalances in waste service delivery, waste government systems and lack of planning tools.

Due to the past dispensation, there are huge discrepancies in waste management in towns and townships. The townships are generally lacking in the necessary waste management tools such as bins and skip, hence they are invariably dirtier than the towns, which in most cases have all the necessary tools and resources.

Waste collection was also not offered to the townships; hence communities were forced to find their own ways dealing with their waste. With no proper tools and limited resources, communities were forced to dump in any open spaces within the township. This has resulted in a culture of normality relating to living with waste being cultivated. There is now a need for capacity building and awareness on appropriate waste management practices and the provision of the necessary tools and resources.

The elevation of waste management to the status of a basic service is indicative of its importance. The poor waste management practices are a common source for diseases and illness in our communities. It goes without saying therefore that as we strive to better our people`s way of life, waste management should not be neglected. It should therefore be reflected in our IDP`s. While the free basic waste removal programme has not been effected, it does not mean that we don`t have to do anything ourselves.

Programme director I am proud to mention here today that at least 1495 jobs will be created for a period of 4 months with this project.

In view of the above number of jobs created out of this campaign. Youth has been given a priority to participate in ensuring the success of the entire program. The Department also wishes to mobilize the youth of today in a crusade to create healthy and prosperous communities, so that tomorrow`s youth can be free from the evils which still blight the lives of so many young people today.

We now look at the overall winner of the competition from all 9 provinces which will be announced by the National Department on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2008. Best of luck to all municipalities took part in the entire competition.

In conclusion, Ladies and gentlemen, I also wish to impress on all of you gathered here today to join government in its effort to reduce waste generation and disposal by 50% and 25% respectively by 2012 and develop plan for zero waste by 2022.

***THANK YOU***