

**Speech by the Executive Mayor, IMT Mahlangu  
during the first Council Meeting, held on 29 January  
2009.**

**Programme Director**

**Honourable Chief Whip of Nkangala District Municipality**

**Management from Platinum Colliery**

**Councillors and your family members**

**Management from Steve Tshwete Municipality**

**Parents and learners**

**Distinguished guests**

**Media**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Welcome to the first Council meeting of the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality for the year 2009. This year is already kicking off on a particularly high note. No only is there a full 12 months of Council activities for us to look forward to, including contesting a general election, but also an opportunity today to pay homage to Councillors who have served the local community loyally, unselfishly and with dedication for 13 and even 14 years.

Today also we see an opportunity for us to invest in the futures of the leaders of tomorrow by granting bursaries to five deserving and ambitious students from this municipality with the help of a local partner in the mining sector. But more about this later...

Firstly, the leading, innovative and award-winning local authority that is the Steve Tshwete Municipality recommits itself at the start of 2009 to providing quality, effective and affordable municipal services to its residents, to driving development aimed at creating future prosperity and the wise

utilisation of available funds to provide a conducive environment in which a better life for all can be ensured.

I wish to echo the following sentiments recently expressed by South African President Kgalema Motlanthe in his new year's message:

"Our government is aware that to attain social cohesion we must continue to improve the economic situation of all our people. This includes, among others, narrowing the income gap among all South Africans and launching an all-out assault on inequality and poverty. Accordingly, I would like to appeal to all South Africans to treat each other with respect.

"This includes tolerance towards foreign nationals who, for one reason or the other, have made South Africa their home. Let us work towards building a united, democratic, non-sexist, non-racial and prosperous nation that derives strength from the diversity of its people. Importantly, all of us, including the private sector and government departments, must act together to reduce inefficient use of electricity and develop alternative sources of renewable energy."

We, as the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, are firmly on track and are a sterling example to all other municipalities in the country as far as successful service delivery to our residents and the thriving local business sector is concerned.

Evidence of this in the past year was not only clinching the prestigious 2008 Vuna Award for Municipal Excellence in Mpumalanga, but also seeing to it that the Nkangala District Municipality, of which it is an integral part, was eventually crowned the winner of the National Vuna Award for the year in South Africa.

Furthermore, Steve Tshwete also won the coveted Goven Mbeki Housing Award in Mpumalanga for being the local municipality that was best able to meet the targets set by the Provincial Legislature for the construction and servicing of RDP houses which they allocate, finance and monitor the progress of.

Added to that is winning the annual Mpumalanga Cleanest Town Award for the record third time.

We were dealt a blow over the recent festive season by tragic road accidents that claimed the lives of Ward 4 Town Councillor Mahlodi Girly Mathebula and her mother in-law on Christmas Day, as well as those of a former Mayor of and serving Ward Committee member of Kwazamokuhle, Phillemon Lucky Gama (54), his 27-year-old daughter, Phindile Faith Gama, and his grandson, Lwazi Phakathi (7). Our deepest sympathies go towards the families and friends of the deceased.

But we were, however, heartened by the incredible achievements of our star matric learner of 2008, Wynaand Prinsloo, who obtained six distinctions in the subjects of Afrikaans, English, Mathematics, Information Technology, Accounting and Physical Science.

While we are on an academic note, we are excited and proud to announce today that with financial sponsorship from Optimum Colliery, we are able to offer five local students bursaries to study further and ensure themselves a brighter future. The contract in this regard will be officially signed after this address. The lucky students, who have been carefully selected by my Mayoral Committee, are Sthembiso Prudence Skosana, Lunga Mandis Lukhozi, Martin Moeng, Thamsanqa Maseko and Portia Mandoyi.

While this is seen as an investment in the future of South Africa, we must not forget to pay tribute to those who have served our community with distinction in the past as Councillors. The Speaker, Cllr and the Rev Thomas Mpye, and Member of the Mayoral Committee, Cllr Alex Xulu, are to be congratulated on having served for 14 years, while Cllrs Elza du Toit, Bongani Mayaba and Michiel Brits are to be commended for all having 13 years of service behind their names.

The year 2009 poses some unique challenges for us as a Local Municipality and the inhabitants of our area of jurisdiction to meet.

Not least of these are the ongoing war against HIV, AIDS and other communicable diseases, crime, corruption and violence against women and children, house robberies, organised crime and corruption as well as illegal firearms. At the same time we must also strengthen the institutions for supporting democracy as well as cement social cohesion.

In this regard mention must be made of the nation's fourth democratic General Elections, which will be held sometime this year. I wish to congratulate all those who have already registered as voters and urge those who have not done so to register as soon as possible at the outlets provided for this by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).

Let us heed our President's call to deepen our democracy by exercising our choice freely in the elections and help create a peaceful climate where each and every one of us can exercise his or her choice without intimidation and fear. Let us respect the right of all parties to freely campaign peacefully within our municipal area.

On the sporting front, South Africa is set to host the FIFA Confederation Cup in June. This is a very important barometer

of not only how our national team will perform during the 2010 FIFA World Cup Competition, but also, of how hospitable we are as a nation. Let us as a leading town in Mpumalanga see how we can play our rightful part in this and also benefit from the potential opportunities that this event offers.

I want to wish each and every resident a prosperous, progressive and booming 2009 and assure them of our ongoing commitment to service delivery and creating an environment in which they and their families can develop, thrive and prosper.

I thank you...