

**ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF STEVE TSHWETE, CLLR MIKE MASINA
AT THE AT THE AGRICULTURAL SUMMIT AT CIVIC CENTRE ON THE 28 MARCH
2012**

THANK YOU PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

Speaker of council: Cllr. Robert Xaba

Chief whip: Cllr. Busi Ndala

MMC for Agriculture & Human Settlement: Cllr Smakaleng Nkadimeng

All MMC's and Councillors Present

Municipal Manager

All Managers and Council Officials

Various Government Department and Stakeholders

Ward Committees and CDW's

Distinguished Guest and Delegates

First of all I would like to thank you for honouring our invitation to attend and participate in this very important Agricultural Summit, a Summit to discuss lasting solutions to challenges facing us as a community with a positive Theme "Empowering Communities in Fighting Poverty and Contribute to Food Security"

We all know that poverty, unemployment and hunger are major challenges not only here in Steve Tshwete and Mpumalanga Province but to the Country as a whole and leads to many societal ills, such as crime, violence especially domestic violence and inequality.

When addressing the AGCO AFRICA SUMMIT, former President Thabo Mbeki in his speech titled "A VISION FOR AGRICULTURE IN AFRICA" had this to say "The Majority of the people of Africa earns their living from agricultural activity, principally in subsistence agriculture. In this regard the World bank says that agriculture employs 65 percent of Africa's labour force and account for 32 percent of gross domestic products". He continued to say "Thus it is obvious that virtually all the principal challenges our continent faces are intimately related to African Agriculture, and accordingly, can only be resolved within the context of the positioning of Agriculture as a central driver in the process of the renewal and development of African Society".

Amongst the vital issues the former President was referring to is "The Affirmation of the dignity of all Africans as respected, Equal and honoured members of the World Community of Nations".

Exactly 10 days ago on the 18th of March during the Fundraising Gala of the Paul Mthimunya Bursary Fund, I spoke of dignity in the same context and I said "An economically unstable country becomes a subject of masters in a form of neighbours and lenders. It becomes a subject of lenders and investors. The same apply to a Province, Municipality or a family, *Uthola abomalume, abobabomncane nabo mamazala bashaya umthetho kwakho ngoba awunamali.*

(Relative dictating terms for you in your own house because they borrow you money).

In deed Agriculture should be a central driver in the process of correcting and reversing these challenges. You will agree with me that as Africans, our soil is over resourced and should be utilized for the benefit of all if we are serious with the attainment of "Economic Freedom in our life time".

Our President His Majesty: JG Zuma during the Zero Hunger Campaign he said "Kufanele sisebenzise umhlabathi ukulwa nendlala nokuntuleka komsebenzi, silime amasimu futhi sitshale izingadi uma singenza njalo indlala izoba umlandu"

The South African Soil is very rich of Mineral resources it is also fertile for ploughing and growing plants as well as grazing live stock.

In the same occasion the President made a clarion call to all Government Departments, NGO's, and Businesses to take part in the fight against hunger and unemployment. I urge our youth *ukuthi iyeke ubuvila*, but form cooperatives, Agricultural related companies, *siyeke ukuqela ama R2.00 nokubhema inyawupe*, but follow Agricultural Careers, very few not non of our students persue agricultural related studies and that is where lies the solution.

I must state however, that Government and the private sector have tried several interventions: giving people land, tractors, seeds and funding for the same purpose.

It is very disturbing that people misappropriate these funds for their own petty selfish interest at the expense of multitudes; some jealously keep hectars of Government Land for themselves without use. It will be evident from the presentations today particularly from the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development.

Thereafter, we must discuss these challenges and come up with solution & resolutions which would be implemented and I will monitor the implementation of these resolutions, because a hungry community is a ticking time bomb they become vulnerable to opportunistic and destructive protests.

Lets Green Steve Tshwete Municipality and have at least one garden in one home, one garden one school, one garden in one church, it can be more than that, hunger will be the thing of the past.

I am so pleased to wish this Agricultural Summit success.

I THANK YOU!!!!!!