

KAROO CONFERENCE AND TRADE FAIR 2009 IN GRAAFF-REINET

OPENING ADDRESS BY EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF CACADU DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, MLUNGISI MVOKO, AT THE TRADE FAIR ON 25 MARCH 2009

Ministers of Provincial Governments

Mayors

Government officials

Members of Academic institutions and bodies

Members of the business sector

Members of the media

And residents

As I open the Trade Fair this evening, I would like to focus on the themes of partnership, linkages and pooling of resources. As people, we often box and confine things so that they can be better controlled and managed. But we are NOT expected to only think in the box... with our heads stuck in the sand. Similarly, we are required to work within our areas of jurisdiction – based on the country's demarcation of municipal and provincial boundaries - for effective planning, management and accountability for the resources found in those boundaries. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the resources found in our areas, are better used and managed through partnerships with other roleplayers who may have what it takes to leverage these resources on our doorsteps and these roleplayers may be on the other side of the boundary.

Linkages across boundaries have become part of our ethos towards economic development and skills and knowledge transfer. It is one of the pillars of the District's economic growth and development strategy. The same vision and spirit is shared by five Karoo municipalities in the Cacadu district, who have organised themselves as the *Karoo Cluster* in the district through which they plan and pool resources for Karoo development. The Goat and Mohair initiative is one of the visionary programmes to emerge from this collaboration. This part of the Eastern Cape is a mohair hub contributing over 60% of the world Mohair clip. The initiative involves a strong skills development through an emerging farmers programme and

an unemployed youth internship programme for economic development. The initiative also brings on board commercial farmers, business, media and academic institutions as catalysts for an intensive job creation project that will expand through the district. The Tourism College in Graaff-Reinet provides the academic support for the internship programme.

Mohair is a natural fibre and forms part of the sub-programmes in Cacadu's Fibre Innovation Hub programme. The hub includes the beneficiation of the Agave Americana plant that grows extensively in the district. The CSIR has pumped R12 Million of research into the no-waste beneficiation process of the plant resulting in the production of **inulin**, fibre and textiles and paper.

Along the coast, one of our municipalities are producing textiles from pineapple leaves. Already 25kg has been ordered by a textile company in the Western Cape. Several municipalities in the Cacadu district are suitable locations for the expansion of this project as a result of district-wide assessment of resources and opportunities for linkages.

I've cited cross-boundary linkages that are inter-municipal within the district. As a semi-rural district municipality, with rich natural resources, unspoilt tourism opportunity, and a strong agriculture base, we saw it fit to forge a partnership with the neighbouring metropolitan municipality – an urban area with established infrastructure and technology, a deepwater port and industrial development zone. The synergies are strong and result in co-dependency on especially tourism, agricultural and manufacturing export and skills transfer. We identified our strengths as autonomous municipalities and where these could be combined and harnessed for greater regional prosperity for the Province. The collaboration and synergy affects in particular the private, business sector of both municipalities. Collaboration is not only limited to government entities but between businesses and other sectors. Today our Council adopted its strategy for developing and supporting small micro and medium enterprises – another key factor and catalyst for Karoo development. One of the objectives is to achieve such development through our policies and processes as a municipality.

The Karoo Development Conference has brought four Provinces together for the combination and linkage of strengths and resources towards massive opportunities for wealth creation. I'd like to use this opportunity to thank the organisers for their innovation and vision. I am excited at what will be presented over the next two days: actual research done on the very real possibilities that exist for cross-boundary collaboration for very real economic development. Cross boundary networks – if focussed and very specific – can bring about smart management and beneficiation of our country's resources and in harmony with building human capital. It brings about the joint lobbying of National spending and attention. It is the way forward.

And with that I declare the Karoo Development Trade Fair open. I thank you.