



**Address by the SALGA President, Cllr Parks Tau, at the Municipal Indaba on
Chemicals and Waste Phakisa**

Date 26 October 2017

Theme: *Sustainable Cities within the Waste Management Context*

Programme Director,
Ministers of Environmental Affairs, Ms Edna Molewa,
Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr David van Rooyen
Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Mr Jeff Radebe,
Executive Mayors,
MMCs and Councillors,
Director-Generals, and
Ladies and gentlemen:

I am delighted to join you today at this august Municipal Indaba. This platform offers us space to share experiences and best practice on the topic at hand, which is entitled, *Sustainable Cities within the Waste Management Context*.

As you are aware, due to factors like globalisation and migration, South Africa faces a challenge of super-urbanisation with more than sixty-three-percent (63%) of our people calling cities their primary home. In this respect, it is projected that by 2050, more than eight-percent (80%) South Africans will reside in cities and urban environments.

The mid- to long-term effects of these determining structural factors are obvious, not least, on the capacity of our public infrastructure to cope with the increasing demands and pressures.

Therefore, the concept and practice of a 'smart city' is about marshalling and mobilising basic and advanced technologies to meet public sector priorities, delivery of quality services, optimise public-private sector partnerships, and use the available means at our disposal towards establishing green and blue economies.

Like everywhere else around the globe, our cities and towns face major challenges in dealing with urbanisation, migration, diminishing resources, immigration, and climate

change which precipitates, for example, water scarcity as seen in Cape Town and energy shortages.

Distinguished guests,

Another significant challenge is the provision of efficient and sustainable waste management services. Smart cities are about identifying opportunities in the waste economies and supporting the generation of self-employment amongst our disadvantaged populations.

Waste economies have material and monetary value which has yet to be maximally exploited in order to address unemployment and poverty. Waste economies and waste management speaks about viewing recycling and renewable sectors as a lifeline especially for our poorest citizens to better their lives.

How then do we formalise the waste economy? How can we provide an enabling framework – in legislation, public-private partnership, reskilling – that would enable better working conditions and, surely, improve the welfare of waste pickers?

You are all familiar that, on average, there are millions of tonnes of uneaten food which ultimately ends up in landfill sites. You are aware and see daily the invisible waste pickers who should rightly be seen as active economic actors, in the green economy, and whose contributions to the national fiscus surely cannot be denied.

How then, do we convert this status quo into usable opportunity to empower our people? Government is to be congratulated for intervening by promulgating a supportive legislative framework.

The Waste Act provides for the use of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) as a regulatory mechanism for waste management. In effect, this empowers government to implement the EPR and allow for the levies charged to assist with some of the infrastructural and operational demands.

Ladies and gentlemen,

South Africa is still utilising landfilling as the main option for dealing with waste. This approach is not sustainable since existing landfill sites are overused and shrinking in available space. Added to this, is the fact that there are now very stringent conditions in developing new landfill sites due to legitimate environmental concerns and shortages of land.

On this matter of sustainable environmental usage, I recall the words of the Nobel laureate, Wangari Maathai when she counselled: “Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own - indeed to embrace the whole of creation in all its

diversity, beauty and wonder. Recognizing that sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible is an idea whose time has come”.

Part of healing the wounds inflicted on the planet by our unconstrained consumption patterns, is about prioritising the waste economy.

As I am sure you would agree, this calls for and demands, innovations on the use of appropriate or alternative waste treatment technologies in municipalities. As SALGA, in order to share international best practice, we have subsequently teamed up with our Belgian counterparts, The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities or in short, VVSG.

In this regard, VVSG is proving significantly useful in sharing good practices with us in areas of waste management at three (3) South African municipalities, namely, at Nquthu, Bergvliet and Witzenberg.

In conclusion, allow me to remind you that waste has a huge potential towards employment creation and shared economic growth. All that is required is to unlock the green job opportunities in this alternative sector for beneficiation and recycling purposes. Community education is vital for ensuring success in waste management initiatives.

I do not need to remind you that, Outcome 10 in the National Development Plan (NDP) talks about “protecting and enhancing our environmental assets”. The waste economy is a lifeblood to engendering energy efficient cities plus rehabilitate South Africa’s natural and reusable assets.

I thank you.