



**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES:
FREEDOM DAY DEBATE**

“Working together to build Unity and Prosperity for All”

26 April 2012

Hon Chairperson of the NCOP

Hon Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development

Hon Members and Special Delegates

Freedom Day marks a founding moment in our country’s history, where all South Africans were for the first time afforded the opportunity to vote and elect a government of their choice. "Freedom" in our context not only means the ability to exercise a democratic right to vote, but should also mean emancipation from the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality, as well as racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination.

Yet, this day also marks an important opportunity to reflect on the road travelled and the many successes we have attained in expanding services and opportunities to millions more of our people. Many now enjoy the benefits of freedom that did not have opportunities before. Equal access to opportunities is a critical indicator in the ‘Freedom Barometer’, if we had such a thing.

And so we cannot rest for as long as challenges remain that prevent all South Africans from enjoying their freedom – being free from poverty, inequality and discrimination. Indeed, these challenges remain key enemies to our collective goals. This years’ theme of ‘Working Together to Build Unity and Prosperity for All’, highlights the fact that all sectors of society need to play an active role in realising our freedom, which will ultimately lead to unity and prosperity for all.

Local Government: The Manifestation of Inequality

Chairperson, our transformation, from a society rooted in discrimination and disparity to a constitutional democracy, posed, and continues to pose, particularly profound challenges at local government level. It is here that acute imbalances in personal wealth, physical infrastructure and the provision of services were and are often most obvious. The establishment of non-racial municipalities did not eliminate the disparities of the past.

Thus, local government is the key site of delivery and development and is central to the entire transformative project of the new South Africa. But South Africans also have an obligation to be actively involved in the programmes of local government, through public participation processes, such as the development of Integrated Development Plans, and Ward Committees. These are but some of the avenues to ensure that citizens work together with councillors and local government to build prosperity for all.

Local economic development is a vital component to address, in innovative local ways, the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. It empowers local initiative to ensure that local solutions are found for local problems. The EPWP and Community Works programmes are also important in achieving these goals. As are LED networks, which identify, document and disseminate good LED practices by creating a Forum to exchange knowledge and successful LED practice. Tourism remains a key driver of local economic development, and the potential for this sector needs to be fully explored. The potential for local economic development to alleviate poverty and build prosperity for local people must be harnessed, and has never been more important.

Local government has thus been given a very broad and challenging set of responsibilities. Effective performance against these expectations can only be met with coherent and coordinated support from national and provincial government, organs of state and civil society. The strengthening of cooperative governance and intergovernmental relations is therefore critically important. Enhanced cooperation and unity of action from national, provincial, and local government will enable government to more effectively meet the needs of South Africans, and build the prosperity we so desire. It is therefore vitally important that we accelerate our efforts to tackle the constraints hampering effective cooperative governance.

In conclusion

Freedom Day serves as a reminder to us that the attainment of our collective freedom requires us to continually work together to eliminate the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. For it is only once these are eliminated, and all South Africans enjoy a prosperous life, that true freedom for all will be achieved.

Chairperson, we are committed to working with our partners in government, civil society and most importantly our citizens to ensure that this goal becomes reality. It may be a long walk, but the sacrifices of so many remind us: WE DARE NOT FAIL!

I thank you.

Hon Cllr Schippers
SALGA