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MEDIA STATEMENT

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SALGA URGES PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA AND 7th PARLIAMENT TO PUT REVITALIZING DYSFUNCTIONAL MUNICIPALITIES AS KEY PRIORITY IN THE NEW PARLIAMENTARY TERM

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) urges the 7th Parliament to prioritize the local government agenda and use its legislative and oversight powers to emphasize revitalizing dysfunctional municipalities and improving service delivery. This call comes as the President of the Republic, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, is expected to deliver his Opening Address at a Joint Sitting of the Houses of Parliament on Thursday, 18 July 2024.

This year's Opening of Parliament marks the beginning of the country's new administration at both National and Provincial levels and coincides with the 30 Years Review since the advent of democracy. The 30-Year Review Report recognizes that building a capable, ethical, and developmental state requires prioritizing and improving the governance and fiscal sustainability of local government leading up to 2030.

Cllr Bheke Stofile, who will lead the Local Government delegation, including SALGA delegates in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), will participate in the Opening of Parliament debate on behalf of the local government.

Cllr Stofile says, "Many of our municipalities face significant challenges, compromising the delivery of essential services to our communities. These challenges exist both within municipal control (internal environment) and outside of municipal control (external environment)."

"Let us acknowledge the national elections held on 29 May 2024, which saw the democratic will of the people expressed through the ballot. The results have led to the formation of a Government of National Unity, demonstrating our commitment to collaboration and collective progress," says Cllr Stofile.

"Recognizing the pivotal role of local government in development is paramount for our nation's progress. Therefore, the agenda of the 7th Parliament should place particular emphasis on the vital role of cooperative governance as a cornerstone of our government structure. However, contributors to dysfunction should be considered holistically by looking at both structural and systematic challenges," added Cllr Stofile.

Service delivery challenges have also been highlighted as a criterion for dysfunction. Local Government has a backlog of infrastructure repairs and maintenance that have not been adequately addressed. This is often blamed solely on the lack of skills and mismanagement of municipalities. The fact is that Local Government further needs capital and operational investment to meet the demand for service delivery, over and above the inefficiencies within municipalities.

Financial distress has been one of the criteria for dysfunction; municipal consumers owe municipalities R348 billion.

Local government is responsible for 46% of the constitutional functions and has been given a distinctive status and role in building democracy and promoting socio-economic development.

SALGA remains committed to inspiring service delivery collaboratively with the government to ensure the delivery of services to the citizens of South Africa.

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