

**Acceptance remarks by the newly-elected Executive Mayor
of the City of Polokwane, Cllr Makoro Mosema John Mpe, at
the swearing-in ceremony, Polokwane Jack Botes Hall**

03 September 2021

Mister Speaker, Cllr Mariri Ralefatane

Council Chief-whip, Cllr Mamedupi Teffo

His and Her worships, Mayors of our local municipalities,

Beng Mabu, Maaparankwe Bahlomphegi Magoshi a rena

Fellow Councillors,

Leadership of our glorious movement, ANC and its Alliance,

Leadership of the official opposition, the EFF, and all political parties
represented in Council,

Provincial Head of the IEC,

Municipal Manager and your team,

Representatives of various government departments and entities,

Members and leaders of organised labour, SAMWU AND IMATU,

Members of the Business Community,

Members of the academia,

Members of our ward Committees,

Representatives of Community-Based Organizations;

Non-Governmental Organizations,

Distinguished members of the Media,

Fellow residents of Polokwane, listening in various media platforms,

Good morning, Thobela!

It is with great pleasure that I commence by expressing that I am humbled by the privilege afforded to me by this Council to lead the people of Polokwane. Please indulge me to equally express my sincerest gratitude for the trust and confidence once more bestowed upon me by my beloved organisation, the people's organization, the African National Congress for us to continue with the programme designed to realize a better life for all.

Let me also extend a hand of friendship and my willingness to work together with all political parties represented here in Council, for the common cause of serving our people. Much like the ferocious Sharks and the beautiful Yellow fish, swimming together in the same ocean, we are bound to work together in harmony. I solemnly believe that it is only through robust debates and diverse opinions that we shall build a much better and prosperous City. As Kwame Nkrumah once said: "The forces that unite us are intrinsic and greater than the superimposed influences that keep us apart". We are after all brought together in this council by the common objective of achieving a better life for all.

Mister Speaker, Polokwane remains the only hope of us having a metro in our province. It is the economic, social and political nerve centre and the only existing city in our province. It is a destination of choice for those seeking economic opportunities in the entire SADEC region, not limited to those residing in the far northern part of our country. In this regard allow me to appreciate the important contributions made by previous generations of councils and executive mayors who have played a pivotal role in shaping the developmental landscape of the City. We thank them for laying a firm foundation for the growth and development of this City.

Mister Speaker, in the same vein I wish to express my gratitude to our traditional leaders Maapara nkwe, Ba bina Diphoofole ka moka for their commitment to

work with us to build a prosperous Polokwane. Tribute also goes to ordinary men and women, from rural and urban, rich and poor, cleaners, street hawkers, domestic workers, petrol attendants, taxi operators and the business community for the significant role that they play in building, bit by bit, brick by brick a city of our dreams. Indeed, Re aga Polokwane together.

Mister Speaker, while a lot has been done since the advent of a developmental local government in our country, a lot still needs to be done, particularly to ensure proper financial management and adherence to the principles of good governance.

We note the recent report by Auditor General which found that “reasonable steps were not taken to prevent the unauthorised expenditure amounting to R462 089 517, as disclosed in note 54 to the financial statements, in contravention of section 62(1)(d) of the MFMA”. This is an indictment on this Council to ensure that never again shall we see an amount of this magnitude in the brackets of irregular expenditure. As we embark on this new journey, we are cognizant of other challenges confronting our City, including but not limited to:

- Water provision Challenges. The Municipality had in the past resorted to the use of hired water tankers to deliver water. This was costing the Municipality around R6.2 million per month translating into R37.2 million in the last two quarters of the year ended 31 December 2020. Continuous water supply interruptions in the city and villages have become the order of the day. This must come to an end. Short and long-term solutions are thus required to ensure that our people have adequate access to water as a basic need. The use of private trucks has come to an end.
- Capacity shortfalls in electricity supply;
- Road backlogs and tarring of gravel roads remain one of the critical challenges facing us and prevent us from expanding economic opportunities to the most rural parts of our City;
- Housing backlogs. There is a backlog of approximately 66000;
- Officials doing business with the municipality;

- Excessive wage bill;
- Poor audit outcomes. The audit outcomes for the past financial years are as follows – 2015/16 (Unqualified), 2016/17 (Qualified), 2017/18 (Qualified), 2018/19 (Qualified) and 2019/20 (Qualified).

As Arnold Bennett says, “Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by discomforts.” I thus want to assure you all that ours is a change for the better which may bring discomfort among those who engage in wrongdoing.

Winston Churchill explains that "To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often."

Unfortunately, if we do not change our city to be the City of dreams for ordinary people in the villages, in the farms, the homeless and the hopeless in the city, it will continue to be nothing but an intangible dream.

It is Revans in 1980 who said that for an organisation to survive, the rate of learning must be equal to or greater than the rate of change in its external environment. Under my leadership, Polokwane Municipality will have to change. All of us as councillors and officials will ensure that lifelong learning and acquisition of requisite skills remain a priority. As we shall be leading from the front to embark on capacity building programmes for Councillors, Magoshi and Officials through institutions of higher learning. Moreover, skills and qualifications should be pre-requisite for one to be employed in Polokwane and not the surname that one possesses. Capacity, and not the relationship a person enjoys with those leading or working in Polokwane Municipality will be a determining factor for employment opportunities.

This is the era of partnership and collaboration. All the goals articulated herein will need us to work together to ensure that they are not just a pipe-dream. This is so because no single individual possesses monopoly of wisdom to solve all problems. To register emphasis on this point, let me quote Edmund Burke when he said: “Society is indeed a contract. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes

a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born”.

In us, there should never be an element of Selfishness. Selfishness should be discarded because we are not the first or last generation to reside in Polokwane. Individualism should perish. The collective approach and putting the interests first of the people of Polokwane should guide our work.

Mister Speaker, as we are now in the Heritage Month of September, let me quote an African saying which teaches us that “Until lions have their own historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter”. Our city, our district and province as whole has a rich history, which needs to be preserved for future generations. This cannot be done in way that seeks to erase the past. To this end, let me pledge our commitment to making sure that we will prioritise the renaming of municipalities, streets and other areas of geographical significance after our heroes and heroines. This we will do with the view of preserving our history, achieving social cohesion and unity. We shall further ensure that names of our newly built facilities reflect a non-racial and diverse character of the residents of Polokwane.

I am accepting this responsibility with profound humility and courage. I pledge to serve you without fear or favour and remain the humble servants of the people of this City. Working together we will reclaim victory against poverty, unemployment and inequalities and build a prosperous future. I shall do this as an ordinary villager residing at stand number 266 Mamatsha Village in Ga-Molepo Ward 04 of Polokwane.

Mister Speaker, I believe that working together we shall rise above poverty and inequalities and build a prosperous future. I also commit to pioneer local economic development initiatives geared at withering away the storm of economic hardship which are worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. We should move towards a new economic growth path. We should strive to strengthen local economic growth and create jobs, particularly for young people who worked hard to obtain academic qualifications. It pains me to see young graduates with degrees and diplomas without jobs. Therefore, all entry level jobs should be used to resolve the challenge of youth unemployment,

particularly among graduates. There will be no room for nepotism, such as jobs for friends and family, under my watch.

Our bidding system should support entrepreneurship and produce black industrialists in order to undo the injustices of the past and address inequalities. Corrupt practices shall not be tolerated. The next mayoral committee shall look into the challenge of officials doing business with the municipality as reported by the Auditor General. Disciplinary proceedings will be undertaken against those found to be in contravention with the MFMA and relevant regulations. Broad investigations will be undertaken to diagnose all weaknesses within the system and ensure good governance and accountability.

I therefore count on partnerships with our hardworking and disciplined municipal workers of Polokwane, our communities, business, traditional leaders and all other stakeholders. Working together we shall and must find a long-lasting solution to financial, governance and developmental challenges facing the City as we move towards the realisation of a Vision to become the first Metro in Limpopo.

Mister Speaker allow me to once again extend a hand of friendship to all opposition parties, for the common course of serving our people. Through robust debates and diverse opinions, we will build a better and prosperous City. After all, we all brought together by the common objective of achieving a better life for all.

The time has come for this Council, the Mayoral Committee, all councillors and each and every employee of Polokwane to roll up their sleeves and commit themselves to the task of building a Smart City.

Mister Speaker, Section 80 (3)(a) of the Municipal Structures Act gives powers to the Executive Mayor to appoint a mayoral committee; and (b), provide that the Executive Mayor may delegate his powers and duties to the mayoral committee member to act in his absence.

In line with this provision, I hereby appoint the following Councillors to serve as members of the Mayoral Committee:

Admin and Governance – Cllr Adolf Rapetsoa

Roads, Transport and Stormwater – Cllr Wilhemina Phoshoko

Land use and Spatial Planning – Cllr Hafis Shaik

Finance and LED – Cllr Malebana Benjamin

Water and Sanitation – Cllr Moakamedi Alfred

Waste and Environment – Cllr Malope Jenifer

Community Services – Cllr Mothata Lisbeth

Energy – Cllr Mamabolo Caroline

Housing – Cllr Nkwe Tshepho

Sports, Art, Culture and Special Programmes – Cllr Josephine Maja

Let me quote from Che Guavara when he said that: “how easy is it to govern when one follows a system of consulting the will of the people and one hold as the only norm all the actions which contribute to the well-being of the people”

We will be embarking on an extensive stakeholder drive and consultation to translate these words into a solid plan of action. I therefore count on partnerships with all the stakeholders which we intend visiting. Our city is blessed with two big churches, Zion Christian Church, St. Engenas Zion Christian Church and the entire religious community as the pride and important heritage of our City and province. We shall be embarking on the work of consulting various stakeholders including traditional leaders, churches and business. We shall promote ethical business activities in our City. As we move towards solving all the governance and developmental challenges facing our city towards an inclusive growth and development as we build our city to a metro status in the province. I know I can count on all of you to act together for a common good of growing our city.

With these words, I just want to lend a hand of friendship that we will be working on an open-door policy to ensure that we engage various political parties to find long-lasting solutions on issues of common interest.

Thank you very much for this rare opportunity of the position of Executive Mayor, I accept it with humility.

May God bless you all!

May God Bless the people of Polokwane.

Ke ya Leboga,