

Mayoral remarks by Cllr Freddy Hlungwane at the Arbor Day celebrations

Pienaarsrivier, Bela Bela

07 September 2011

Programme Director

Chief Whip of the ANC

Councillors

Senior managers of the Dept of Agriculture, forestry and fisheries

Officials of the department of Water Affairs

Head of Social and Community Services, Mme Dolly Mafa

Municipal employees

Community members of Pienaarsriver

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thobela, abuxeni, Good Morning

Programme Director

Six days ago, our Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mme Tina Joemat – Pettersson launched the National Arbor week in Rustenburg, North West. Yesterday Premier Cassel Mathale launched the provincial Arbor week in Lephalale.

And today we are meeting here to do the same, locally.

We do this, to demonstrate our government's firm commitment and resolve to greening our country by promoting tree planting in each municipality, at every public facility and institutions.

This is critical for us as a government and a nation in fighting poverty, deforestation, climate change and global warming.

Therefore, as community members, leaders and officials of all three spheres of government, we have an obligation to help deepen our people's understanding of the critical importance of tree planting.

In this regard, we should also, all of us (both private and public sector) support the government's Million Trees programme.

Through this campaign, we want to see each family, factory, schools, businesses planting a tree (fruit or indigenous) for preservation.

Not only will we beautifying our home, places of work, our surroundings and improving the value of our properties, but we will equally be addressing serious environmental and social concerns such as a food security.

Programme Director

Many of our people still do not appreciate the importance of trees in the life of both human and animal species.

Many simply do not care. Some go to the extent of even making it their business to routinely bringing down trees, to set fire or selling it for profit, at great cost to our environment.

Therefore, it is important that as we go about celebrating Arbor Day by planting trees today, we also call upon our community to stop these practises that harm our environment.

Programme Director

Arbor Day is no longer about just tree planting.

It is also about community development, its about our dignity, about economic development and the future of this country and that of the world.

It is about the livelihood and survival of the human race especially in light of the serious threats pose by climate change and global warming, to human life on the planet.

Central to all these, is the preservation of nature, its raw natural resources, in particular trees and forests meant to support us.

Programme Director

We should remember that without trees, which breaths life into this world, we may not be able to live decent, healthy lifestyle, let alone survive the heat, floods and other natural disasters.

Without trees, we may also not be able to survive hunger, as a result of lack of food and fruits (bananas, apples, mangos etc) .

Equally, without trees, we may not be able to protect ourselves from the unbearable and at times extreme heat and sun burns.

All, these may sound simple, but trees preserve us and protect ours from extinction. Therefore it is important we that we care for them. That we work together to safeguard our environment.

There are many benefits that we will derive from doing so.

For instance, trees have a direct contribution to ensuring access to food and food production at small households, while forests provide job creation and critical development of communities through legal harvesting of timber and development of timber related products.

Programme Director

Given the challenges we still face in getting our people understand the importance of Arbor Day and global warming, we should make an effort to simplify it cool, exciting and entertaining for them to be associated with tree planting and equally participate in the preservation of our forest.

We should bear in mind that climate change and global warming are still foreign concepts to a lot of our people, therefore we must continuously engage them on these.

We must go and reach out to them in the language they understand using all available means of communication particularly radio, TV and drama to convey our messages.

It is only through some of those interventions, that our people will know the challenges that we are facing, as a society, a nation and the world population.

But importantly, it is through collective knowledge, ownership and working together with our community that we can overcome the threats to our food insecurity while preventing natural disasters.

In this regard, I wish to call upon on all our people to fully participate in these initiatives.

Plant a tree. Save our forests.

I thank you.