

Madume!

Programme Director

This year's Annual Ward Committees' Conference takes place under the theme, "**Year of the struggle icons: Ward Committees putting more impetus to the Thuma Mina rallying call**". We are meeting in the penultimate day of one of the months that undoubtedly define South Africa as we see it today – August – which is aptly referred to as Women's Month. The contribution of women in the struggle for liberation is immeasurable. It was in this very month in 1956 that women of fortitude in the mould of Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa and Sophia Williams to mention but a few, led more than 20 000 women of all races in protest against the proposed amendments to the Urban Areas Act of 1950, commonly referred to as the "pass laws." The rest as they say, is history but my appeal to all male folk is to **revere, love and treasure all women** because after all they gave birth to us. The continuing abuse, maiming, raping and killing of our women should ground to a complete halt. Let us all men pledge that, "**Not in our names**".

It is no coincidence that one of the two centenaries celebrated is a woman. Wherever she is, Mama Sisulu is smiling from ear to ear at the sight of the participatory democracy she fought so hard for, maturing like good wine which mellows with time. Our president, as depicted in the second part of our theme this year, has been criss crossing the country urging people to volunteer their services to their communities. There is no guessing who the volunteers-in-chief are in this regard. You, ward committees, are part of the success story as you are the most important conveyor belt between the community and the municipality. Ward Committees are in essence established to help improve communication between local municipalities and communities.

Ward Committees help enhance public participation which is a vital part of our democracy, which allows for citizens to be involved in how their communities are governed. Local Government: Municipal Structures Act no.117 of 1998, requires Municipalities to develop mechanisms to consult communities and community organisations in performing their functions and exercising its powers.

Ward Committee members, you are the reason we are gathered here. We appreciate the sterling work you perform in your various wards. You, against all odds and as mentioned earlier, provide the vital link between Ward Councillors, the Community and the Municipality.

We are not oblivious of the fact that you also make it possible for members of communities to influence municipal planning in a manner which best addresses their needs. It is through you that our communication with communities has drastically improved. You remain the vital cog in our quest to remain forbearers in the public participation stakes. For that we say Keep it up!!!

As Blouberg Municipality, we can now proudly and without fear say that our democracy is getting stronger, mainly because there is a visible involvement of our communities in our planning processes like our Integrated Development Planning process as well as Public Hearings on the Annual Report. That is all made possible by your efforts, and we say, Thank You for that!!!

It is also encouraging to note that resolutions taken the previous year received the undivided attention of our administration as they were standing items in governance forums. We also hope that this conference will positively influence and give perspective on what communities desire. Let this, however not be misunderstood to be a

platform for wish lists but rather as an effort to find practical solutions to the problems that bedevil us as the Blouberg citizenry.

Programme Director, let me not give the impression that it is all honky dowry down there. The past few weeks were very trying for the municipality as we experienced large scale violent protests which on hind sight could have somehow been averted. As ward committees and CDWs, we are the most privileged with information and it is therefore incumbent upon us to provide strategic direction to our communities by clearly spelling out to them the intergovernmental relations aspects. Provide clarity to the effect that in as much as we are at the coal face of service delivery, we can only do this or that much. It is not in any way abdicating responsibility, but just showing people that there are funded and unfunded mandates. We are one government (inclusive of Provincial and National) but with varying responsibilities. The sooner we knuckle down, report back and make our communities understand such dynamics, the lesser protests we will have. We therefore appeal to your consciences to refrain from participating in activities that will ultimately harm the integrity and the being of our municipality and government. It is the right thing to do.

Last but not least, Council sitting of the 30th July 2018 resolved that even in the midst of the high inflation rate and a faltering economy, we increase your out of pocket expenses stipend to R1 500. 00.

Please further note that the increment will take effect retrospectively from July 2018. While awaiting further directive from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) on that score, we hope gore bot la seka bo e ja.

Amaaandlaaaa!!!

