

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY COUNCILLOR LUNTU BOBO AT THE  
LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BEST PRACTICES SYMPOSIUM  
HELD IN EAST LONDON ON MONDAY 03 APRIL 2006**

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Mr. Programme Director, ladies and gentlemen, I greet you all this morning and welcome you to this landmark symposium. I bring you greetings from the Executive Mayor of Buffalo City Councillor Zintle Peter who unfortunately could not be with us on this important day in the annals of Buffalo City Municipality, South African Local Government and the South African Cities Network.

Today Buffalo City is hosting the very first post-elections South African Cities Network gathering. This seminar also happens to be the first post-elections meeting of municipalities in this second phase of developmental Local Government in South Africa and it is held here in Buffalo City. And as if that was not enough, this is the very first post-elections event where South African municipalities meet their international development partners - and they are meeting in Buffalo City.

As you can see therefore, Mr. Programme Director, Councillor Peter had all the right reasons to ask me to convey her warmest welcome to this noble gathering as her very first official economic development guests as Executive Mayor of Buffalo City.

We are gathered here for this Local Economic Development Best Practices Symposium. Our primary objective is to look at what kind of benefits have thus far accrued from the partnership between the South African Cities Network and its USA counterpart the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

For the next two days our main focus is going to be local economic development, with particular emphasis on the challenges and effects of cooperative transatlantic economic development on the three participating municipalities namely Buffalo City, Mangaung and Msunduzi.

In welcoming you therefore ladies and gentlemen, I want to single out representatives of both ICMA and the Cities Network who have managed to be with us at this landmark symposium.

From ICMA we have Ms. Suzanne Cosner and her team. And from the Cities Network we have the CEO Mr. Sithole Mbanga and his team. I want to commend both organisations for the unselfish approach they have thus far adopted towards their relationship, a partnership that enhances life-long learning for us as members of the Cities Network.

In saying this I want to invite the assembly to welcome Ms Ceana Nkhahle of the Cities Network who is the South African coordinator of this programme and thank her for her commitment and passion for development within member-municipalities of the Cities Network. Let's give her a big hand.

Mr. Programme Director, the important role played by USAID in this learning programme can neither be underestimated nor undermined. Beneficiaries of donor funding sometimes tend to take their benefactors for granted. We sign beautifully worded Memoranda of Understanding and once we start getting the donor funds we generally forget to acknowledge the positive outcomes of the financial intervention of the donor organisation.

This time the amount of knowledge and skills that our economic development practitioners have thus far gained from this programme make it imperative upon us to acknowledge the presence amongst us of representatives of USAID.

Welcome, USAID. You are now firmly within one of the geographic areas that you targeted for financial assistance. I am sure that I am echoing the sentiments of your other two beneficiaries, Msunduzi and Mangaung, when I say that your efforts are

I want to welcome representatives of the two fellow-municipalities, Msunduzi and Mangaung. These are fellow-soldiers in the ongoing struggle to maximise local economic development as a means to fight joblessness and its negative results in society like endemic hunger and poverty, diseases, domestic abuse and crime. Together we stand in the forefront of the national drive to eradicate these evils and to bring lasting relief and respectability to our respective communities. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen from our fellow-municipalities.

I also extend a word of welcome to our business partners and stakeholders who are with us today. The Cities Network has in many ways demonstrated its appreciation of and support for the logic of engaging local role players in aspects of development that impact directly on the lives and daily activities of local communities.

We fully subscribe to the objectives of cooperative development as enshrined in the concept of Public Private Partnerships, and we regard private sector role players as indispensable partners in our local economic development programmes. We welcome you, ladies and gentlemen, not as strangers or visitors to this symposium, but as accredited decision makers and implementers alongside your respective municipalities.

I have strategically reserved the final word of welcome for the Honourable Deputy Minister for Provincial and Local Government Ms Nomatyala Hangana. Madame Deputy Minister, your presence here today is a great honour to us. On

behalf of the Executive Mayor Councillor Peter I invite you, Madame Deputy Minister, to please feel at home.

Although we are meeting you for the first time as this forum, your passion for developmental Local Government has already preceded you. I therefore want to reassure you, Madame Deputy Minister, that we are very comfortable in your company, and we invite you to feel the same in our company.

Welcome to fellow Councillors and Officials of Buffalo City who are gracing this symposium. Welcome to members of the public and local representative structures that have shown a keen interest to be with us today. Welcome everybody. Relax and feel at home. We value your presence.

I thank you.