

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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“Transformational Leadership in the Public Sector”

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Programme Director;

President of CIGFARO, Mr Du Plessis;

Members of the CIGFARO Board and the Management;

Distinguished delegates and guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour to have the opportunity to present this address, which seeks to explore transformational leadership in the public sector during the 90th annual gathering of CIGFARO. This conference comes at an opportune time as we approach the beginning of our final quarter of 25 years of our democracy, thus it offers us an opportunity to reflect on the leadership strides and challenges our young democracy confronts. We must be mindful of the divided past, we as democratic government inherited. Our inheritance includes a regime that was unrepresentative, undemocratic and highly oppressive which became less and less answerable even to the constituency it claimed to represent.

The legal, institutional, and governance architecture which was inherited was fragmented and inappropriate for reconstruction and development. The state therefore lacked the requisite leadership, makeup and capacity, it was also inefficient and out of touch with the needs and realities of ordinary people, with no clear responsibilities, coordination and planning.

Consequently, we adopted a constitution, which defines government as having three distinctive, interdependent and interrelated spheres of governance. It calls on these spheres to “*cooperate with one another in mutual trust and good faith in assisting and supporting each other*” towards, amongst others:

- (1) Preserving the peace, national unity and the indivisibility of the republic;
- (2) Securing the well-being of the people; and
- (3) Providing effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government

In exercising their powers and performing their functions in a manner that does not encroach on the geographic, functional or institutional integrity of each other. In undertaking these functions the state must first and foremost be developmental and remain conscious that “*development is first of all a political process*”¹, in the words of former Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Consequently, a “*developmental state must bring about rapid and sustainable transformation in a country’s economic and/or social conditions through active, intensive and effective intervention in the structural causes of economic or social underdevelopment.*”

¹ Cheru F, Cramer C and Oqubay A, *The Oxford Handbook of the Ethiopian Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2019) p33.

The developmental state “*recognizes the importance of building constructive relations with all sectors of society, while insulating themselves from capture by sectional interests.*”² Consequently, we took a conscious decision to build a developmental state, which is defined in the National Developmental Plan as:

- (1) Having the capacity to intervene in the economy in the interest of higher rates of growth and sustainable development;
- (2) Addressing challenges of unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment with requisite emphasis on vulnerable groups, and
- (3) Facilitating for the mobilizing of society as a whole, especially the poor, to act as their own liberators through participatory and representative democracy.

In this regard, the local sphere of governance plays a critical and central role since it is the sphere closest to our people. Therefore, it has to occupy the place of pride of our government since everything we do happens in that sphere, be it in the political, social, cultural, religious or economic aspects of our day-to-day lives. Essentially, our citizens experience everything government does through that sphere.

We tend to ignore the development duties of the municipalities, which include “*managing its administration, and budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community*”.

² *Ibid*

Therefore, any successes or failures of government are most likely to be felt at a local government level. The local sphere also has a developmental role to play which must include the involvement of communities and community organisations, including cooperatives.

It is common knowledge that the deteriorating state of local government is perhaps our biggest Achilles heel. Whether it is the AG reports, the treasury reports or COGTA reports it is clear that we need to do things differently, as the three spheres of government as the Constitution mandates the national and provincial governments through regulations and other measures to support and strengthen the capacities of municipalities to manage their own affairs.

Clearly we have not been able to give them adequate support, hence the need to change the way government works.

In order to address this and change the way government approaches development, we have adopted the District Development Model, which model requires all spheres of government to plan and implement together at the level of the District. This will require a *“developmental local government”* which will *“play a central role in representing our communities, protecting our human rights and meeting our basic needs”*.

By strengthening local government and ensuring horizontal and vertical collaboration across all spheres of governance, we will:

- (1) Solve the Silos at a horizontal and vertical level
- (2) Narrow the distance between the people and government by strengthening the coordination role and capacities at the District and City levels ;
- (3) Deliver Integrated Services whilst strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation and impact at district and local levels, as well as within the movement;
- (4) Ensure inclusive and gender mainstreamed budgets based on the needs and aspirations of our people and communities at a local level;
- (5) Maximise impact and aligning resources at our disposal;
- (6) Change the face of our rural and urban landscapes by ensuring complementarity between urban and rural development, with a deliberate emphasis on Local Economic Development, and
- (7) Ensure sustainable development whilst accelerating initiatives to promote poverty eradication, employment and equality.

The District Development Model builds on the White Paper on Local Government (1998), which locates the role of local government as critical in *“rebuilding local communities and environments, as the basis for a democratic, integrated, prosperous and truly non-racial society”*³.

Therefore, the model is a practical Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) mechanism for all three spheres of governance to work jointly and to plan and act in unison.

³ http://www.cogta.gov.za/cgta_2016/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/whitepaper_on_Local-Gov_1998.pdf

The model consists of a process by which joint, collaborative planning is undertaken at local, district, and metropolitan spheres together resulting in a single strategically focussed One Plan for each of the 44 districts and 8 metropolitan geographic spaces in the country.

The planning process is to be supported in a more rigorous way at local level through reconfigured capacities. The resultant One Plan for each space has to be adopted by all three spheres of government based on a consultative process with communities and stakeholders.

The One Plan consists of the objectives, outputs, roles and responsibilities, as well as commitments in terms of which all spheres and departments, partners will have to act, and against which they will be held accountable for prioritising resources and delivering results. The District Municipality forms an important part of the planning, delivery as well as Monitoring and Evaluation architecture.

The Model is based on analyses of previous and current initiatives to improve developmental Local Government. Wherein developmental change is shaped and owned at a local level in partnership with communities, citizens and social actors. The successful functioning of local government is critical in this regard but insufficient on its own without more cohesive governance and overall government coordination and functioning. The Model is aimed at enhancing institutional powers and functions, which includes the ability to work in a cooperative manner so that there is greater cohesion and positive impact.

By using the district as the landing strip that will bring about the appropriate scale so we can 'crowd in' investments of all sectors to maximize social development and economic growth. By working on a single plan and budget in the three interdependent, interrelated and distinct spheres of governance will render greater impact.

This will also facilitate for transparency and accountability, eventually it will support a real time monitoring and evaluation, which must be driven by the citizen. In the end, we shall transform the spatial patterns and the economic landscape of all forty-four of our Districts and the eight Metros.

Through the District Model we want to develop a blueprint for the development of our country by focusing on the Districts as development hubs, where the three spheres of government coalesce to fast track development and bridge the inequality gap, whilst operating from one budget, one implementation plan over a 5 to 25 year period.

Through the envisaged anchor projects, this model will create opportunities for people and cooperatives to take advantage of the available business opportunities whilst creating decent work and cutting the social distance between the leadership and our people. Ultimately, we envisage that the model will:

- (1) Reverse the migration patterns, so that people migrate out of the district out of choice and not desperation.

- (2) Accelerate shared economic growth to ensure a better quality of life and jobs.
- (3) Address poverty and inequality
- (4) Address the Apartheid and Bantustan settlement and spatial patterns
- (5) Close the digital divide, by facilitating for the roll out of ICT infrastructure.

As we deliver on these anchor projects, we will also start addressing the immediate concerns, which include the electricity and water backlogs as well as the social challenges confronting our communities including those of crime, and gender based violence.

I wish to take this opportunity to invite CIGFARO as our delivery partner in the Model.

All this requires leadership of the right type, which will plan and command the economy towards particular outcomes, whilst also protecting its citizens and economy against foreign exploitation.

We require a more visionary leadership, which inspires the confidence of our people, both at executive administrative levels. Such a leadership must be ready to work hard and go the extra mile, whilst also motivating the people they work with. Such a leadership must be concerned about changing the fortunes of our people, especially the poor and marginalised, not just ticking the box. This also requires leaders who are compassionate about our people. Compassion enables one to execute, with impact, the tasks, it is not just about the job.

Our leaders ought to be prudent with the resources, whilst also being results orientated, transparent, service oriented, corruption free and above reproach. That kind of leadership must have the capacity and capabilities, as well as the requisite skills to understand the needs of our people. They must ensure that projects are executed to high quality and on time within the available budgets. Our leaders, at an executive and administrative level ought to also bring professionalism so that we may cease to rely on consultants for almost everything.

Our leadership must pride itself in its work, whilst working with a passion. Without passion, one is unlikely to succeed. In the words of Robin Sharma *“Leadership is not about a title or a designation. It's about impact, influence and inspiration. Impact involves getting results, influence is about spreading the passion you have for your work, and you have to inspire team-mates”*... might we add AND our people.

To be a good and transformational leader one needs to also need to live their ego at the door each and every morning so that one can do a truly outstanding job, for nothing is more fulfilling like a job well done. Everybody is capable of doing a good job as Harriet Tubman said *“every dream begins with dreamer, always remember you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars, to change the world”*. It is as President Nelson Mandela said [I quote] *“there is no passion to be found playing small in settling for a life less than what you are capable of”*.

We will also need to work in a cooperative manner, outside silos, and with an orientation towards results.

To bring about such a leadership we will need to forge partnerships with institutions such as CIGFARO to maintain and enforce such a type of leadership.

This requires relevant and tailored management and leadership training as well as capacity support to meet the contextual challenges of every municipality. We must also accelerate the ability to leverage private sector resources, which will require the rebuilding of trust between capital markets and municipalities.

However, the ultimate measure of the state's performance is whether it is achieving its overarching strategic objectives. Overcoming the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality have consistently been the state's core objectives. This requires that we work as one in the three spheres of governance whilst also ridding ourselves of the pertaining horizontal and vertical silos. Such a state must, as anticipated by the NDP, promote active citizenry and governance as mutually reinforcing goals.

The state therefore needs to prioritise, to focus and forge discipline and create momentum in its interventions in line with established developmental goals.

We must have a sense of urgency and change our approaches to implementation. This also requires consistency we must stay the course instead of chopping and changing plans.

In holding government accountable and bringing government closer to the people, we have dared to invent the future and have the courage to discard the known external formulas. We dare to dream for a better South Africa. This will also require that we tackle the contradictions that exist in our policies and address the fundamental structural constraints that continue to reproduce poverty and inequality.

In order to address these, we need to strengthen collaboration and partnerships amongst the various social partners, especially business, civil society, state owned enterprises and the different spheres of government. The best economies worldwide underpin their economic development strategies on sound strategies as the driving force.

The participatory approach is one of the District Model's key strengths, based on rigorous consultations of multiple stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society and labour. As we always reiterate, the NDP is thus a plan for the country, not only for government. Our imperative lies in how we implement our plans and policies.

Ngiyabonga.