

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT MR BASIKOPO MAKAMU ON THE OCCASION OF ARBOR MONTH PROVINCIAL LAUNCH: MAPHOPHE VILLAGE, COLLINS CHABANI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, VHEMBE DISTRICT**

**11 September 2018**

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Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality, Cllr Florence Radzilani

Mayor of Collins Chabane Local Municipality, Cllr Joyce Bila

Your Royal Highness, Hosinkulu Shilungwa II Mhinga and other Traditional Leadership present  
Members of the Mayoral Committee

Councillors

Deputy Director General: Forestry and Natural Resource Management-DAFF: Mme Morongoa  
Leseke

Distinguished guests

Foresters and LandCare Committee Members;

Officials from all spheres of government in pursuit of Greening Campaign;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is an honour to join you in celebrating the Provincial Arbor Week. The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr Senzeni Zokwana led the launch of the National Arbor Week at Mbobela Stadium in Mpumalanga Province on 07-September 2018.

This event, marks the start of the planting season, it is time to inspire people to plant, nurture and celebrate the unique biodiversity of our country. Today's attendance demonstrates that Together We can play part in protecting our indigenous trees for socio-economic and environmental sustainability.

South Africans have come a long way in celebrating National Arbor Week which is one of the important campaigns in the agriculture and the environmental calendars. Arbor Day was first celebrated in our country in 1983. The campaign captured the imagination of people who recognized the need to raise awareness on the value of trees and forests in our society. As

sources of primary societal needs such as building material, food, medicine, and simple scenic beauty, trees and forests play a vital role in the health and well-being of communities. Collective enthusiasm for the importance of these issues in South Africa inspired the National Government to extend the celebration of Arbor Day to National Arbor Week in 1999. From 1 to 7 September every year, government institutions, schools, communities, businesses and organisations are reminded and encouraged to participate in community "greening" to improve the health and beauty of the local environment. In recent times the scope of the Arbor Week campaign and the greening function has grown to include issues of global importance such as conservation of species biodiversity, food security and mitigation of green- house gases that lead to global climate change.

This Year of 2018, the Minister of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, Mr Senzeni Zokwana extended Arbor Week to Arbor Month. Arbor is a national campaign to celebrate South Africa's trees and to raise awareness about the importance of tree planting.

Arbor Month calls for government institutions, schools, communities, businesses and organisations to participate in community "greening" to improve the health and beauty of the local environment. In recent times the scope of the Arbor Week campaign and the greening function has grown to include issues of global importance such as conservation of species biodiversity, food security and mitigation of green- house gases that lead to global climate change.

Programme Director it is a fact that our country is still facing the challenge of drought. The sectors such as agriculture and forestry are still feeling the effects of drought on production and general issues related to climate. These prevailing drought conditions could be a sign that the effects of climate change which manifests itself as global warming are already starting to set in. This means climate change is now a reality. In view of these oscillating conditions, the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development hosted the Disaster Indaba 11-12 July 2017 which resolved on strategies that farmers should employ in responding to risk and disaster.

This year's Arbor Week is celebrated under the theme ***"Forests and Sustainable Cities"*** because the country has not escaped the effects of drought. The theme came when members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) proposed that a central theme for the annual celebration of the International Day would enhance coordinated communications from the forest

community, while enabling Member States and Organizations to tailor it relevant to their priority areas. Forests and trees are critical and they offer multiple uses for many reasons. It shows that 80% of terrestrial biodiversity lives in forest and many species go extinct as a results of being destroyed. Forests also play a role in climate change and accelerate global warming. They provide food, fiber and medicine.

**For the Year 2018 campaign, the trees of the year are:**

- **Scientific: *Boscia albitrunca***

**Common tree: Shepherd's tree (English); Siphiso (Swati); Witgat/Matopie (Afrikaans); Mohlopi (Sepedi); Xukutsi (Tswana); Muthobi (Venda).**

- **Scientific: *Podocarpus latifolius*.**

**Common tree: Real wood (English); Umsondi (Zulu); Opregte geelhout (Afrikaans); Mogobagoba (Sepedi); Muhovhohovho (Venda).**

The trees of the year are selected from the species that are becoming extinct from our indigenous heritage. One species is common and the other is rare in terms of occurrence.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would also like to share with you what the LDARD and DAFF in conjunction with other stakeholders are doing to address issues of greening in the country.

The LandCare Programme which is community based and community led natural resource management is currently spending its R12 million allocation to deal with unsustainable land management practices that contribute to greening. These projects are mainly dealing with the rehabilitation of the state of environment through soil conservation and veld management.

The DAFF has developed a national greening strategy which aims to support Local government, Non-Government Organisations, Community Based Organisations and other role players such as the corporative sector to initiate and implement greening interventions. The greening strategy s' main focus has been to assist Municipalities to develop greening plans at local level and to ensure that greening is included in the Integrated development Plans (IDPs). This initiative came as a result of the way services were provided in the previous dispensation. The more affluent areas were provided for in terms of greening services, whereas the previously disadvantaged areas

such as townships were not catered for. The main focus of the greening strategy is to uplift previously disadvantaged areas, while maintaining and protecting trees and other elements of greening in areas where they exist already. LDARD has since been championing greening initiatives in the past, however this will be revived given the resources.

Programme Director, according to the results of the World Population Prospects: 2015 revision, the world population reached 7.3 billion as of mid-2015, implying that the world has added approximately one billion people in the span of the last twelve years. According to this report, as it stands the world population will continue to grow and more than half of the global population growth between now and 2050 are expected to occur in Africa.

This has serious implications for food security and provision. Traditional methods of food production and nutrition need to adapt to the changes and growing demand for food. In addition primary production of food is faced by challenges amongst them competing natural resources for production, with land being the primary and critical one.

As food prices go high because of the global economic instability many South Africans cannot afford to buy healthy food because the basic staples become scarce and expensive. Hence, the nation is embarking on greening the nation initiative, a healthy, diverse and productive environment treasured by the whole community. Through greening and Climate Smart Agriculture food insecure households will have access to environmentally-friendly agricultural technologies, resources and training, and capacity to reduce hunger. LDARD is currently embarking on Climate Smart Agriculture to ensure that farmers adopt these innovative approaches through agroforestry and conservation agriculture to build resilience and reducing vulnerability.

Forestry through jobs in rural areas creates an environment where households derive an income to buy food and other items in the household. However, where small growers are involved, small plantations could be integrated with food gardens or cash crops to ensure household food security while awaiting the trees to grow. Such an Agroforestry system could be one of the key pillars for reducing hunger and poverty in both urban and rural areas. As a result the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has finalized the development of the Agroforestry Strategy and Implementation plan. We are proud to announce that Limpopo is amongst the Provinces that this strategy will be piloted for implementation in phases.

Programme Director, trees do not only make a contribution to sustainable development through household food security alone. Trees and forests work as the world's carbon sinks and have a greater capacity to absorb Carbon dioxide carbon emissions. On the other hand the destruction of the world's forests and other vegetation by humans actually reduces nature's carbon sinking capacity.

As they grow, trees and other green plants accumulate biomass. About 45% of the dry weight of plant biomass consists of Carbon, all of which comes from Carbon dioxide these plants have removed from the atmosphere through photosynthesis.

Very hard and heavy wood contains lots of carbon. About 70% of the above-ground biomass of a forest is found in tree trunks. Wood is a very important storage of Carbon and it is the part of a tree most used for all kinds of purposes. Depending on how we use the wood, carbon may remain locked up for a very long time.

During the dry and windy season in the country, we experience a lot of uncontrolled veld and forest fires. This campaign gives us a platform to become increasingly aware of the impact of fires on our precious Natural Resources and on the Commercial Forestry Sector. The risk of the spread of wildfires needs to be reduced by restricting the free spread of wildfires. It is for this reason that we collaborate with Working on Fire who plays a critical role in protecting the environment and saving lives.

Programme Director, in 2015, the Country hosted the 14<sup>th</sup> World Forestry Congress in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Durban. The World Forestry Congress was a convergence of scientists, policy-makers, government officials, technicians, civil society organizations and other role players to discuss and debate challenges, solutions and new innovations affecting the forestry sector globally. However during events of note such as the Congress it is beneficial when there is a legacy left behind, especially for local communities. The Department resolved to profile some of these projects during the annual Arbor Week celebrations. The projects for profiling this year include the furniture making projects supported by SAFCOL in Mpumalanga and Limpopo which is recognised as making a contribution towards the creation of economic and employment opportunities, especially in the rural areas of the country.

Programme Director, the Arbor City Award competition was reintroduced by government in partnership with Total South Africa and the Institute for Environment and Recreation Management in the year 2002. The main aim of the competition is to recognise and provide incentives for town and cities for greening their areas especially the disadvantaged areas such as townships and informal settlements. The 2018 competition was open for both Metropolitan and Local and Rural-Based Municipalities.

Today as we launch the Arbor Week Campaign, we will also be congratulating Polokwane Local Municipality who have done well in the competition and were awarded a prize during the National launch in the Eastern Cape.

The Arbor Week Campaign and the Arbor City Awards competition would not be a success without our partners and sponsors. In addition to this, we would like to thank other partners and role players who through their efforts we are able to make our country green and a better place for all people to live in. The general community and other sectors such as business and Non-Government Organisations are invited to join hands with government so that we can achieve our goal of greening the country. Government cannot do it alone and we need your support. Working together we can achieve greening of our country.

The success with the implementation of the Million trees Programme and other greening interventions have been realized through a partnership between the three spheres of government, Non-Government Organisations, Community Based Organisations and the corporate Sector. This shows that working together we can green this country.

I declare the Limpopo Provincial Arbor Month Officially Launched

Thank You