

ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR DURING THE
WATERBERG DISTRICT ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION
HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2010 AT ROOIBERG
COMMUNITY HALL AT 10:00, THABAZIMBI LOCAL
MUNICIPALITY.

Programme Director,

The Mayor of Thabazimbi Local Municipality Cde Naledi Matlou,

Councillors,

Management of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and
Fisheries,

Officials from government and municipalities,

Members of the community,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thobela, Goeie more, Avuxeni, Good Morning!!!

It is a great honour for me to be given this opportunity to address you during this august event. Arbor week is a National annual event that takes place from 1 – 7 September aimed at raising awareness about trees and their importance. This Concept was started in 1872 when one man named John Sterling Morton realised that it is important to have a day to celebrate and plant trees as a way of managing deforestation.

The theme for this year is:- **“Plant for the planet – grow green”** . This theme aligns well with our million tree programme that links to the global Billion trees programme and also in dealing with the issues of Climate Change and Global Warming. The Forestry section of The National Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in collaboration with the Provincial Department of Agriculture, other sector department, municipalities and non-governmental organisations made it possible by working together on this endeavour to plant more trees.

Programme Director, we are gathered here today to remind and to recommit ourselves as the citizens of this Province and in particular the Waterberg District on the importance of planting and conserving trees which are playing a pivotal role in the lives of our people.

The importance of trees is not only measured in terms of shade, fruits and greening the towns and cities, but trees have become vital in many ways. Trees are a resource that requires protection and are to be used for the benefit of all our people, not just for urban communities, but also for our rural communities who often live in barren areas, in the context of sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

Programme Director, in the past huge investments of time and money were made in greening the formally white towns and suburbs of our country. We are gratified and indeed proud of more than the decade of tree planting that has produced the tree-lined streets in many parts of our cities and towns. We are more than happy to see that such activities have been introduced in other township and rural areas.

Despite the efforts made in the past few years, our townships and rural areas have not generally enjoyed the benefits of tree planting. Today we take this opportunity to say let us use what we have. Nature has given us marula trees which have quite a number of products like mikumbi and we can make body lotions and other products.

Programme Director, we need to vigorously encourage and promote a culture of tree planting in our areas; hence the Department is giving away free trees to schools, Community Based Organisations, Private organisations and individual households.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I don't think I could have done any justice to anyone of you if I don't mention the biggest threats plants and forests face today and that is veld and forests fires.

The chance of veldfire igniting, spreading and causing damage to assets and loss of human life is high. The Department published the fire prohibition notice in Government gazette no. 26407, which is declared in terms of the Forests Act of 1984.

Failure to comply with the notice is a punishable offence, either fine or imprisonment or liability to pay for any damages caused as determined by the court of law.

The Province is rated as extremely high veld risk areas due to the fact that more than 90% of the Province is covered with woodlands.

Every year many lives are lost and millions of rand worth of damages are caused to property, livestock, environment and the livelihoods, especially that of the rural poor. Let us all work together to prevent veldfires from damaging our forests, plantations, grazing land, orchards and the housing settlements.

Fires stop with you. We don't want to see unnecessary veld and forest fires destroying our trees, plantations, farms and commercial forests. The prevention of veld and forest fires is crucial if forestry is to continue contributing to the creation of a better life for all the citizens District and Province. The Waterberg District Municipality has spent millions of rand to equip our local municipalities with state of the art fire fighting vehicles to combat and prevent all forms of fire.

It is worth mentioning that as government we must encourage communities against cutting trees. Let us urge our people to use deadwood for firewood.

Let us join hands together during this event and plant many trees and continue to plant throughout the year.

I thank you.