

SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE FOR AGRICULTURE GALA DINNER.

Programme Directors,

**MEC for the Limpopo Department of Agriculture,
Honourable Joy Matshoge,**

Mayor of BelaBela Local Municipality Cllr. Nhlapo,

Mayors and Councillors present,

Head of the Department Mme Maisela,

General Manager for Rural Development Mme Mashego,

**Chairperson of the Adjudication Committee Dr Chauke
and the Team,**

Motivational Speaker Dr Agripa Khathide,

**Officials from the Department of Agriculture, other sector
departments and Municipalities,**

Recipients of the Awards,

Members of the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good evening. Thobela.

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to welcome you to this august occasion. On behalf of the citizens of Waterberg, we say feel free, enjoy and experience the comfort of the district.

The people of Waterberg are justifiably proud to host you in this mountainous region of South Africa in Limpopo Province. The beauty of the landscape, the culture of the people, the abundance of wildlife and the ancient history make this area one of the South Africa's prime tourism and adventure destination.

Located just two hours' drive from the giant metropolitan hub of South Africa's industrial heartland of Pretoria and Johannesburg, the Waterberg offers numerous investment opportunities for business, tourism and recreational development.

With the increased cost of travel, the Waterberg is strategically placed to attract many visitors who seek to escape from the pressures of the cities to enjoy the peace of this diverse wilderness destination

Waterberg is home to an internationally recognized Biosphere Reserve in the heartland of this mountainous region. Within the Biosphere Reserve, we have the Waterberg Meander which covers a distance of 350 kilometres with sixteen attraction sites. Waterberg is also home to Nylsvlei, an internationally recognized wetland which has been accorded RAMSAR status.

Programme Director, a few kilometers from Mokopane town in Mogalakwena Local Municipality, we have Makapan Valley

World Heritage Site, where Chief Mokopane of the Ndebele tribe bravely fought and defended his people against Herman Potgieter.

It is at Makapan Valley caves where you find fossils which include some of the oldest ancestral remains in South Africa and indicate that early humans lived there some 2.8 million years ago.

The Modimolle mountain, rising out on the east of Modimolle town, is a sacred site which holds an important place in the history and culture of the people of the district. The mountain is in the process of being declared a heritage site.

Programme Director, we are this evening gathered here in Bela-Bela town, a vibrant tourism centre where the modern facilities attract ever increasing numbers to this well located resort town. In this venue, we have the hot spring which yields over 20 000 litres of water per hour at a constant temperature of 53 degrees Celsius, flows into the enclosed Spa Complex, where pools and spa treatment rooms are open to visitors.

The surrounding grounds have been developed to provide a wide range of water sport facilities, including super tubes; speed slides; a wave pool; river ride; cable water ski-ing; tennis, paddle boats and horse riding. These are just a few of the many icons that we have in the district as we are on the go for growth and development.

Programme Director, we are mindful that you had a busy schedule today as you exchange knowledge and experience with

regard to understanding global trends of Information Communication and sharing best practices.

We do believe that the capacity that Agricultural practitioners and advisors received during the conference will go a long way in assisting and empowering famers especially emerging ones in the district and the province as a whole. Let me take this opportunity to also wish the nominees for the Awards good luck.

Ladies and gentlemen, I once more welcome you all with the traditional warmth and the friendliness of the people of Waterberg and we look forward to your pleasurable return.

Together we move Limpopo and South Africa Forward.

I THANK YOU.