

Executive Mayors of Emfuleni and Lesedi Local Municipality – Cllr. Gift Moerane and Cllr. Lerato Maloka,

Honourable Speaker present,

Members of Mayoral Committees present;

Ward councillors of ward 6, 7, 23

The clergymen and women,

Khulumani Support Group,

Family members of the deceased and survivors,

Distinguished guests,

Community leaders, political leaders

People of Bophelong,

I greet you all.

Exactly 35 years ago on this day, marks one of the longest and most widespread period of black resistance in South Africa by the communities of the former Lekoa and Evaton Town Councils. The Vaal Civic Association organised a stay away, school boycott and a march for the 3rd of September in 1984 to protest against the unwarranted increase of tariffs for municipal service. These demonstrations led to an estimated 600 people dying by September 1985.

In the weeks following these developments, five men and one woman who became internationally known as the “Sharpeville Six” namely Reginald Sefatsa, Reid Mokoena,

Moses Diniso, Theresa Ramashamole, Duma Khumalo and Francis Mokhesi, including many other local activists and political leaders were arrested and later tried in the popular infamous “Delmas Treason Trial”. Many more associated uprising campaigns across South Africa resulted in the South African government declaring a protracted State of Emergency.

It is a cause of celebration to note that through hard work, determination, and fortitude, the few Cosas activists under the leadership of Ephraim Mogale, Wantu Zenzile, Shepherd Mati, Lulu Johnson including local leadership such as Sy Nkodi, Joseph Sithole, Mkhambhe Malindi, Rhee Masangane, Lolo Skhosana and Advocate Qina Malindi, were able to pass the leadership baton and the inheritance of a qualitatively developed constituency to one another.

Programme Director

This year’s theme for this commemorative day is *“Celebrating 25 years of democracy, Growing South Africa together”*. With this principle we as Sedibeng District Municipality seek to promote cultural diversity, social cohesion, reconciliation, peace and economic development.

In every community there are living human treasures who possess a high degree of knowledge, skills and history pertaining to different aspects of diverse living heritage. It is therefore important for the communities of Sedibeng to reclaim, restore and preserve these various aspects of living heritage to address challenges communities are facing.

Commemorative events such as these are imperative in telling the tragic stories of our country's past, in order that our youth today may learn and write better dreams for our future, to create and challenge dialogues that take the socio-economic agenda of this country to greater heights and grow South Africa for the coming generations.

Today we can change the situation by re-enforcing a non-racial, non-sexist, democracy and re-symbolize a developmental society. I therefore call on all youth and stakeholders in general, including every single person in the Sedibeng region to be part of the developmental state through discipline, moral values and commitment to pay our services to ensure a sustainable municipality. **Without paying our services the municipality will not be able to render the services to the community adequately.**

Honourable guests

Indeed we have come far in our 25 years of democracy as a country, where in the Apartheid era the basic human rights of African people were not recognised as a necessity and were pushed aside.

Over the past 25 years, the dignity of our people has been restored. The lives of South Africans have improved.

Programme Director,

Given this immense contribution made by many families that suffered the most under the repressive system of those days, the political leadership of this municipality felt it correct to acknowledge the ultimate sacrifice that many of the victims made, by partnering through stakeholder

consultation with various NPO's and NGO's that record and re-tell the heritage of this region.

With its diverse cultural and heritage offerings, embedded in rich natural products, the Sedibeng Region has the potential to grow into a major tourism destination, thus resulting in the mass creation of tourism-based businesses and jobs.

The Sedibeng District Municipality is looking forward to forming long lasting partnerships with all stakeholders by hosting a Heritage Stakeholder Summit to map a way forward for the future of heritage economy in the SEDIBENG REGION. This summit will unite all commemorative days under one discussion and form a dialogue on how the Sedibeng Region can use these auspicious and globally recognised events as a revenue and economic incubator for the region.

In the next 25th years of democracy, we should be in a position to have created enough jobs, built skills and capture talents and honoured our cultural and political heritage in the Sedibeng region.

The game changer and job creator for our region rests upon the creative and arts sector.

Ladies and Gentleman

The month of September comes with newness. A season where nature and us as human beings awake from a long deep winter sleep.

In closing I say this to you...let us arise from our sleep with transformation, let us arise to re-vitalise our democracy, let us arise our state of living, it is our hands, in your hands to

ensure our South Africa becomes a better South Africa for the future generation. Let us live the way we dream to be, let us be who we aspire to be.

I bid all the citizens of Sedibeng a successful and fulfilled heritage month.

Thank you.