

MEC HON. M MVOKO REMARKS DURING THE HANDOVER AND SHOWCASING OF THE ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AT NDABANKULU SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL IN NDABAKAZI, GCUWA

01 MARCH 2022

Executive Mayors and Councillors

Heads of Departments

CEOs

Organised Businesses

School Governing Body Members

Principals

Educators

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning.

Programme Director, I am privileged and honoured to be here today to be part of the handover and showcasing of this schools Ecological Resource Management System (ERMS), an intervention that will significantly improve water and sanitation conditions for schools in the rural areas of our province whilst also contributing to the National Schools Nutrition Programme.

In the recent past, we have observed and experienced persistent drought conditions and the spectre of continuous warm weather conditions across the country due to climate change, which threaten future water security. It has become evident that water

may increasingly become the limiting resource restricting future socio-economic development of our province and that of our country. This therefore requires us to acquire appropriate and affordable technologies that provide long-lasting solutions to our water-related challenges.

Within this context, the integrated biogas and sanitation system, which maximises both energy and wastewater treatment outcomes, will greatly contribute to local sustainability, while improving the value of investment in green technologies.

The Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism through our agency, the Eastern Cape Development Corporation, in partnership with Finishes of Nature Global (Pty) Ltd, implemented this ERMS innovation in 30 schools, mostly in Amathole and Chris Hani regions. This has afforded these beneficiaries with dignified waterborne sanitation linked to onsite renewable energy generation, nutrient beneficiation through the vegetable gardens that feeds the schools and resource recycling.

This system is centred around the pilot roll-out of the integrated biogas and algal sanitation system (IBASS). The system has demonstrated a reliable, robust, and low maintenance approach to providing rural schools with decent, dignified and safe sanitation. The ERMS system therefore puts an emphasis on the promotion of water sanitation and hygiene, given that it is directly linked to improved standard of living and is also an important component for quality education.

The successful rollout of this sustainable ecological resources management system in our schools is linked to positive social, financial and local economic impact which among others include:

- Provision of dignified sanitation, which will improve attendance, particularly by female-bodied scholars;
- Improved public health;
- Replacement of fossil fuel imports and savings in energy;
- Employment opportunities for the operation and maintenance of the system;

- Increase in local suppliers through the reduction in economic outflows for bottled gas and food imports;
- Creation of practical life science laboratory in environmental biotechnology for learners and the functioning of all aspects of the system can be built into the learners' lesson plans.

Programme Director, the success of this programme will radiate greater possibilities for further rollouts and integration into the greater planning platforms for sustainable rural development and poverty reduction. It will further allow for resource mobilisation for communities to be able to create sustainable jobs, produce their own green energy while creating platforms to ensure realisation of hygienic waterborne sanitation.

When interventions and innovations such as the ERMS are undertaken, community members must get involved so they may understand the reasoning behind the project and recognise its benefits. This should motivate and activate participation and support at community level.

I was apprised that the project is currently busy with post-handover sustainability training. It is at this point where communities need to fully partake and take ownership of the project to ensure continued and optimised usage and upkeep.

Programme Director, I must recognise and commend the commitment of the institutions responsible for the implementation of this programme. I must also extend appreciation and gratitude to the European Union, through the National Treasury, for recognising the need for this project and availing the necessary funding to invest in this infrastructure. This is indeed a worthy investment to the promising future of our learners.

Great praise also goes to all the principals and teachers of the benefiting schools who have received us with enthusiasm knowing very well that the future of our country is implanted in those who answered the call to impart knowledge and nurture both academically and socially.

As of today, the Ecological Resource Management System is officially handed over to the 30 schools and the communities. It is now the responsibility of the schools with support from the community members to ensure that these facilities are well maintained.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with climate change, we **MUST** change!!!

I thank you all.