

**Remarks by Eastern Cape MEC for Economic Development,
Environmental Affairs and Tourism Hon. Lubabalo Oscar
Mabuyane at the Marine Day and Greenest Municipality
Competition Awards held in Jeffries Bay on November 1, 2018.**

Theme: **“Nature knows no waste”**

Executive Mayor of Sarah Baartman DM

Acting Mayor of Emalahleni Local Municipality

Speaker of Kouga Local Municipality

Councilors present

Government Officials

Distinguished stakeholders and partners

The Community of Jeffries Bay

Good Morning

It is a privilege for me to welcome and address you in our continued efforts of striving to protect our environment. Before I get into the business of today, I humbly request that we all stand and observe a

moment of silence and pay our respects to the 8 people who lost their lives in the Garden Route wild fires.

Thank you very much. I could not start without observing that disaster because it talks directly to our mandate. The wildfires started in the Western Cape but on environmental matters we observe no boundaries as the fire has also reached the Witelsbos area in Tsitsikama. We must work together and support efforts to bring the fire under control. From here I will go and see the damage so that it can be accommodated in government disaster interventions. I will also engage my counterpart in the Western Cape MEC for Environmental Affairs and Development Planning Anton Bredell so that we prepare better for these fires in future as they are not new in the area. Last year alone, the damage to property was estimated to billions of rands but we can never put a value on the loss of human life, damage to the environment especially flora and fauna, and tourism potential of the area. So we must be better prepared to curb and minimize the impact of these fires to our environment.

Programme Director Our province is joining the world in commemoration of National Marine Day Celebration an event that is held annually around this time of the year. Here at home we combined two programmes with similar purpose into one, the National Marine Day Celebrations and the Greenest Municipality Competition, another Provincial annual event. This is in line with the fulfillment of our Constitutional obligation of ensuring a clean, safe and healthy environment. It is important to reflect on why these two events are critical for our province.

- The National Marine Celebrations highlight the importance of oceans and the role it plays in the daily lives of all South Africans. It is a programme that is designed to create awareness on the marine ecosystem and its benefits such as fisheries, and maritime economy amongst other things, whilst
- The Greenest Municipality Competition, is part of the implementation of the National Waste Management Strategy. It takes into consideration our commitments to waste minimization, through the implementation of waste management functions that are aimed at creating awareness on the reduction of waste generation and disposal to landfill. The competition also seeks to eliminate the risks caused by pollution to human health and the environment.

Theme and messages

Programme Director the substantial and increasing impact of pollution in South Africa, particularly plastic pollution that affects all the ecosystems such as terrestrial, coastal and oceans, we are celebrating Marine Day for 2018 under the theme: “**Nature Knows No Waste**”. As you may be aware, most pollution originates from land before it gets transported to the coastal areas and the oceans

through river systems. This is not only confined to South Africa, it's a global phenomenon. I have read that roughly 80% of all marine pollution originates from activities carried out on land and it has far-reaching impact that are also recognized by key international organisations such as the United Nations. This challenge was identified during the World Oceans day whose focus was more on preventing plastic pollution and encouraging solutions for healthy oceans. We must remember that our oceans represent a significant asset for current and future generations and furthermore, support the tourism industry as many citizens and international visitors flock to our shores to engage in recreational activities such as swimming, diving, whale-watching among other things.

As a province we blessed beyond measure and we are in a unique position in that we are surrounded by three ocean spaces, the Atlantic, Indian and Southern oceans with one of the largest exclusive economic zones in the world under the jurisdiction of South Africa.

We encourage municipalities that are closer to the ocean to take regular water tests to ensure their waters are safe for swimming. Programmes such as Blue Flag Beach Programme which are implemented by WESSA in partnership with our sister department,

the National Department of Tourism are what municipalities should be aiming for in order to position themselves for tourism related economy which our people will benefit from.

It would be amiss to talk to about marine environment and not pay attention to role played estuaries “amachweba” as a regulator and an ecological support to the marine environment. The Kouga Local Municipal area is endowed with a wealth of estuaries that are worthy of being conserved.

Most of the estuaries in the area are relatively transformed due to various activities such as inappropriate development, infrastructure within the watercourse, water abstraction which if not done legally and informed by science, it has the ability to destroy the ecological integrity of the systems. These systems have a direct benefit for us as the communities because they act as nurseries for fish. Without properly managed estuaries, the fish lose the nursery and passage way between the freshwater and marine waters. Added to this is the drought impact in the area, which has drastically reduced the freshwater inflows into estuaries.

The Gamtoos Estuary is reported to have closed up this year, for the first time in approximately 50 years. As you would know the Gamtoos

River is at the heart of the agricultural economy in the Kouga Local Municipality. It is important that the responsible organs of state undertake the preserve these estuaries, especially at this crucial drought period in order to ensure the sustainability of the systems downstream.

Our government continues to inject money to clean litter/pollution from our coastal zone through mass employment programmes such as Working for the Coast, which is funded by the National Department of Environmental Affairs. These kinds of programme must always be supported and appreciated.

Significant reduction of coastal and marine pollution can be achieved by amongst other things addressing the land-based sources of waste and pollution. The 2018 National Marine Week theme focuses on the following key messages:

- Creating awareness on the land-based sources of litter in a bid to minimise litter entering the ocean and coastal systems
- Encouraging local communities to collect litter and recycle to reduce poverty and create sustainable income generation

This theme and the campaign fits very well, like a hand in glove, with the GREENEST MUNICIPALITY COMPETITION an initiative

that started as the Cleanest Town Competition whose aim was to change attitudes by raising awareness and educating our nation on good waste management practices; and to obtain community buy-in and encourage active participation by all stakeholders

The focus of the Competition then was to promote responsible waste management practices at local level but has now progressed to new heights encompassing sustainable development, and climate change considerations at municipal level, hence the name change to Greenest Municipality Competition (GMC)

We are making a call all South Africans to join the “Keep South Africa Clean Campaign. This campaign seeks to mobilize every citizen to become environmentally conscious. From the constitutional responsibility it is our mandate to facilitate an economic growth path that is equitable, inclusive, sustainable and environmentally sound. This enormous job requires a consolidated effort between government, private sector and communities at large to work together.

For the 2018 Greenest Municipality Competition, all the Districts in the province participated by entering their winning Local

Municipalities, so we had 6 competitors and winners will be announced at this event.

In closing, inculcating a sense of pride in our communities is a collective responsibility, and partnerships in raising awareness around behavioral change in waste management and it should be a well-resourced, continuous exercise practiced by all for the benefit of our communities and the environment. Good luck to all the participating municipalities.

Thank you.