

The Deputy Minister of Public Works, Mr. Ntopile Kganyago, MP, celebrates Arbor Day with Polokwane Regional Office

Venue: Polokwane Magistrate's Offices, Limpopo

Date: 08 September 2006

- The Regional Manager of Public Works, Mr. Thomas Dzivhani
- The Regional Manager of Justice, Advocate WK Sonti
- The Regional Manager of Water Affairs and Forestry, Mr. Andrew Tshivhasa
- Other Senior Government Officials
- Distinguished guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

The Department of Public Works is the political champion of the construction industry. This industry is critical to the realization of our reconstruction and development programmes. Sustainable development cannot be achieved unless we align both our built and natural environments. Arbor Day as part of our natural surrounding is not incompatible with the core functions of Public Works, which is mainly building and construction.

Latest scientific and technological break throughs enable us to construct and put up buildings while we are mindful of the impact of our industries to environmental management. The use of building material which allows natural lightning in our construction projects is a prime example. This reduces the amount of electricity consumed, thereby relieving pressure on the country's energy production means. Done on massive scale, this campaign has the potential to preserve some of our resources such as water and the use of fossil fuels including coal in the production of electricity.

In addition, the Department of Public Works in collaboration with the Department of Minerals and Energy, is a co-signatory to the commitment to install technology in our public infrastructure and other buildings to reduce energy consumption. We have adopted energy efficiency and continuously seek innovative ways to save energy.

Few are aware of our role in constructing the multi million rand scientific and research facilities at the Marion and Gough Island towards the South Pole. These facilities, built on behalf of the Department of Environmental Affairs, play a significant role in environmental management research.

The department provides horticultural services to clients to maintain gardens as well as landscaping. By planting these trees at Polokwane Magistrate's Offices today, we are trying to beautify the image of state properties as well as trying to improve service delivery to our clients.

As part of its National Public Works Programme, the Department in recognition of the importance of environment, partnered a private sector company to launch the Clean and Green Special Project under the Community Public Works Programme in 1999 / 2000. Many of these were initiated in most underprivileged communities to plant trees, manage waste, clean our surroundings meanwhile creating necessary jobs.

Even today under the Expanded Public Works Programme, Waste Management services are under consideration as part of expanding the environmental sector opportunities in an effort to massify the scope and impact of EPWP. I am mentioning all these, to bring to your attention our conscious thoughts to ensure compatibility between the built and natural environments.

At the risk of sounding like a biology teacher, we know the value of trees and other useful vegetation in enhancing the aesthetics of our communities, improving the value of our homes, purifying the quality of the air we breathe and preventing the erosion of our top soil which is rich in nutrients.

As we are going to plant Umvume & Umficané today let's not forget to keep on planting trees as they can prevent fire, used for medication as well as planting them in remembrance of our loved ones. The Working for Water and Working for Fire Programmes under EPWP identify harmful and other alien vegetations which have opposite effects to the qualities I mentioned above. We encourage their destruction in the name of environmental conservation.

I wish the Regional Office well in their campaign to continue to create awareness around the importance of Arbor Day. I urge you all to embrace the campaign and put to good use its teachings.

I thank you.