

**Media Statement by Councillor Lassy Chiwayo, Executive Mayor of Mbombela
Local Municipality on the decision by the Ehlanzeni ANC REC to recall him.**

25-03-2010

Member of the Media, thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to come and grace our press conference. Our initial reason for calling the press conference was to give a detailed account since I took office as the Executive Mayor of Mbombela in 2008 on the progress we have made and progress on our state of readiness in hosting 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup. I guess that would not interest you anymore since the recent announcement by the Ehlanzeni ANC REC to recall the Executive Mayor of Mbombela Local Municipality.

When I was deployed by the PEC of the ANC and not the REC as the Executive Mayor of Mbombela Municipality, after the resignation of Comrade Justice Nsibandé, I intended to follow on the footsteps of Comrade Isaiah Khoza and Reginah Mhaule who in my opinion did our movement proud when leading the Municipality. Upon my acceptance of my deployment I made it clear to the leadership of the PEC that I will not accept any interference from any quarter on the day to day running of the municipality, a condition which they gladly endorsed.

I came into the municipality in the midst of allegations of corruption, maladministration, mismanagement and not forgetting that it was still under provincial administration. Some of the allegations corruptions centered on the 2010 Soccer Word Cup included the following:

- Allegations of corruption in the awarding the contract for the building of the stadium
- Allegations of mismanagement in the identification and implementing service delivery projects
- The incapacity of the municipality to deliver on basic services
- Lack of a clear plan to host the 2010 Soccer World Cup

Upon my arrival I quickly developed a clear turnaround strategy called Sakha iMbombela and a master plan for 2010 Soccer World Cup. Inspired by the zeal to fight corruption, maladministration and restore the good name of the municipality, I followed on the steps of President Zuma who clearly stated that we should fight corruption each time it raises its ugly head, to top that the Polokwane Conference took very clear resolutions which amongst other included the fight against corruption. I further extended an investigation into the 2010 Soccer World Cup projects following numerous complains that processes were not followed in the awarding of the tenders to implement the 2010 projects implicating both officials and politicians some in the PEC. The same allegations were also raised during the tenure of my predecessor Mr. Justice Nsibandé. As I had committed myself to good corporate governance, I was not about to sweep any allegation

under the carpet as our people had the right to know what has happened and those that were found to have acted in an unbecoming way to be dealt with, a review of all the contracts was instituted and information will be made available when this task is completed

- Our attention was drawn to irregular payments made to the tune of R43 million to a company owned by Mr. Bobby Motaung, Herbert Theledi and Chris Grip. It also alleged that Mr. Chris Grib skipped the country after failing to honor payments to some of the subcontractors. There are allegations that the same people had interest in the company that was awarded the contract to build the stadium which is led by Mr. Bulelani Ngcuka, Basil Read.
- It was evident that processes were not followed in awarding the same company Basil Read a tender for excavation despite the fact that they did not tender for such work.
- There was no participation of local people in the project including the very same people who gave their land for the construction of the stadium in Matsafeni, whose abject conditions in the midst of a world class soccer facility remains one of the daunting tasks to redress.

One of the challenges the municipality had was to divert money from service delivery programmes to the 2010 stadium with the guise that it was urgent at the expense of service delivery, resulting in most of the service delivery protests we have witnessed in the recent months and all that happened in my absence.

The investigation was further instituted by council to investigate the conduct of the then municipal manager Mr. Jacob' Dladla's conduct in the entire process of the 2010 projects and this led to his suspension from work. I received instructions from some members of the REC and PEC to reinstate Mr. Dladla, an instruction which I vehemently refused to follow as I wanted the legal process to take its course and as I also held a view that Mr. Dladla had a lot to answer.

Disciplinary charges were then instituted against Mr. Dladla and that matter took a year to be concluded as there was serious external interference for us as the council to abort the process which eventually cost the municipality dearly. One of the people who was to be the key to the disciplinary process was the then Speaker of the Municipality Mr. Jimmy Mohlala and was due to testify was assassinated at his house a few days before he was to testify. The Speaker was there when the entire 2010 programme started. His assassination further delayed the process but was eventually concluded.

The Chairperson of the disciplinary committee recommended to the Executive Mayor and Council that Mr. Dladla services be terminated, a decision which we were again instructed not to follow but instead were told to give him a golden hand shake for the remainder of his contract. Once more it was an instruction which I refused to follow and his services were terminated after council gave me a mandate to find a solution that

would protect the citizens of Mbombela. My decision to terminate the services of Mr. Dladla did not go down well with some members of the REC to whom I told that if Dladla was not happy with my decision, he was free to approach any court of law to challenge it, as I did not want to be part of a corrupt relation.

I further made a call that I am seeking legal advice on ways to recover any damages and losses the municipality had suffered under the leadership of Mr. Dladla as per the guidelines of the MFMA. I was informed again by the REC that I was not going to last as Mayor of the Municipality and that upon my removal they will rescind council decision and reinstate Mr. Dladla contrary to the findings against him.

I want to state it categorically clear that since my tenure as Executive Mayor of Mbombela I had no direct or indirect involvement in the awarding of any contract to the companies mentioned above on all the 2010 related projects. By the time I accepted my deployment all contracts were already signed.

It is common knowledge that my life has been threatened and recently through the media my name was featuring very prominently in lists of those who are to be killed after several murders were also reported.

It is unfortunate that the 2010 FIFA Soccer world cup initiative, instead of bringing the much awaited hope and joy to our people, it brought death and pain to some of our families, has divided the province, REC and the Municipality and the most casualty has been the ANC in the process because of sheer greed of some of our leaders. It is still by the grace of the Lord that I am alive and will not be distracted by criminals who masquerade as leaders of our people to advance their selfish interests irrespective of what position they hold in any organisation including my own organisation the ANC as I strongly believe that I am following on the steps of President Zuma as mandated by the Polokwane conference.

Mpumalanga has been beset with service delivery protests and instability which has led to the President sending a delegation comprising of members of the ANC NEC to visit various regions of the ANC in the province so as to find the root causes of the protests. I strongly believe that the action by the REC is pre-emptive strike as they know for a fact that there will be no findings of wrong doing against me, instead the report will show that my tenure as Mayor has been marred by political interference and sabotage because of my resolve to fight corruption.

My struggle has been for a just South Africa where ordinary people benefit from the country's especially when it comes to services delivery. I have not gone into politics to enrich myself as I have devoted my life in serving our people. I have served the people of Mpumalanga in my previous positions as MEC for Sports, Recreation and Culture and later MEC for Finance and during my tenure in both positions none of those departments were reported to have been involved in any allegation of corruption and mismanagement.

When I accepted my deployment to Mbombela, I was involved in my private businesses, which I sacrificed for the sake of the ANC and our people of Mbombela, a decision which I do not regret to have taken. I knew about the difficulties that I was getting myself into as I knew for the fact that corruption has a tendency to fight back and despite all that I resolved not to waiver from my course.

The complexity of the Mbombela problems and fear that some of the PEC members are involved in acts which undermine good governance in Mbombela prompted me to resolve to make a submission to various leaders of the NEC, which among other included the Deputy President of the country Mr. Kgalema Motlhante, the national chairperson of the ANC Conrade Thandi Modise including members of the task team deployed in the province, and recently the Secretary General Mr Gwede Mantashe, a submission which details the origin of the challenges of Mbombela and possible solutions. Until now I patiently await their decision and advice which is why I believe that the REC is working as a mouth piece for some faceless provincial leaders who have no regard for the rule of law and most importantly the ANC.

Many people, some within the structures of the ANC do not know or choose to ignore the resolutions that were taken in Polokwane on the process of deploying members of the ANC. The resolutions were clear that it is the PEC in consultation with the NEC who deploy ANC leaders and not the REC, it is the NEC that deploys Premiers in consultation with the PEC and it is the President that deploys his cabinet in consultation with the NEC. I find it odd and disingenuous that the REC would publicly flout the rules of the ANC with no regard of the effect it will have to the ANC.

Should the NEC uphold the REC decision, which I don't believe will be the case then I would regret the fact that I would have failed to uphold the values of the ANC for which I was imprisoned as a young man in Roben Island. Values which I strongly believe in, which are to fight corruption at all cost. Deep down my heart I strongly believe that members of the ANC and the people of Mbombela are aware of the reason for my persecution and I have no doubt that they will always support my course, and primarily that of the ANC which deployed me to the municipality in the 1st place for the sole purpose of ensuring the organizational Recovery and Renewal of the Mbombela Local Municipality as well as to ensure the saving of the hosting status and the successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup event in Mbombela, we can say with confidence that we have not failed the test in this regard.