



**Speech by the Minister of Energy, Ms Dipuo Peters, MP, on the occasion of the
RustMo1 Solar Farm Launch
28 May 2013, Rustenburg**

Programme Director

The MEC for Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism, Ms
Motlalepula Rosho

The Representative of the Rustenburg Local Municipality, Cllr Phiri

Ward Councillor Ndlovu

Other Government Leaders present here

The Managing Director of Momentous Energy, Gareth Warner

Rre Zakes Tolo, the former MEC of Education and Public Works

Eskom and IDC Representatives

Esteemed Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dumelang Bagaetsho

It is a singular honour for me to be in this momentous event marking new beginnings for the entire North West province. The launch of the RustMo1 Solar Farm brings me great delight as it is the first renewable energy project in entire province.

The launch event also comes a few days after celebrating 50 years of the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). This is interesting because we asserted that

the renewable energy or the green energy industry is for the betterment of the African continent. More interesting is Momentous Energy's motto: "Harnessing the African Sun".

Ladies and Gentlemen, this calls for celebration. Join me in congratulating Momentous Energy on this milestone.

This is also indicative of efforts aimed at embracing this province's renewable energy endowments.

Programme Director,

What we are witnessing here today is a culmination of the work we have been seized with, enjoined by the ANC's 52nd Conference Resolution to "ensure a security of supply of energy resources, and pursuing an energy mix that includes clean and renewable sources to meet the demands of our fast growing economy without compromising our commitment to sustainable development."

We have thus translated that into our programme of action and it is well encapsulated in the work we have undertaken since 2009. Central to our work is the successful implementation of the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP2010). Renewable energy generation sources account for 17.8 GW in the IRP, which is 42%.

As Government, we then made a commitment to embark on a process of moving away from our carbon-intense modes of energy generation. Such a bold decision was faced with scepticism from various quarters. Our groundbreaking Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme was rolled out.

The President of both the African National Congress and the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Jacob Zuma called upon us to create space for the private sector. Such a call put impetus on us to ensure a regulatory environment that is favourable to the private sector, in assisting us towards achieving our goals.

This ground-breaking flagship programme has become a force to be reckoned with in the green economy space. It has won the Green Infrastructure Project of the Year Award at the 6th Global Infrastructure Leadership Forum held in New York. In the same

category where it won the prestigious award were infrastructure projects from the USA and Columbia.

A number of our successful bidders have already embarked on construction work in various sites. I have turned the sod in a number of construction sites, but this is the first in the North West province.

This and other strategic economic development projects within the region ought to play a meaningful role in the improvement of our people's standards of living. The pervasive nature of unemployment, poverty and inequality cannot be ignored. This venture blends well with the Government's efforts of turning the tide against the triples of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

This province has great potential in both the mining and agricultural sectors of the economy. Renewable energy spin-offs and benefits should also be reaped by mineworkers from surrounding mining communities.

This and similar projects present opportunities for the installation of solar water heaters in local communities. In light of the area being agriculturally endowed, the Department of Water Affairs has also provided the full license to enable the extraction of water from a borehole for use by the plant. This can extend to irrigation systems and perimeter fencing.

Achieving skills transfer, community upliftment and localization are the centre of our renewable energy programme. Ours is a programme that is, through its design and implementation, biased towards local economic development.

It is through localization that local industries and SMMEs get to benefit from our infrastructure and build project.

Not only will this project create jobs, but it will also increase knowledge and skills within the area. Education, training and skills development should be prioritized. You shall recall that all jobs created in the renewable energy space have a potential of being

turned into careers. It is investment in training and skills development that would ensure the realization of such prospects.

Some of the successful bidders in the REIPP have established community trusts and direct significant portions of funds towards community development initiatives. Theirs are not just piece meal or “hand-out” interventions, but they are sustainable. One example is that of the provision of training to community members as nature conservation officers by the Metro Wind Van Staden Wind Farm Project in the Eastern Cape (Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality).

The Momentous Foundation Community Trust which has been established by Momentous Energy should also be lauded. The Trust owns 17% of the plant and I am informed that finance has been arranged from the IDC. The management of Momentous Energy has a responsibility of ensuring that all dividends are used for community upliftment programmes.

We are pleased to know that the unskilled labour requirements for construction was met from this local community. I also challenge Momentous Energy to ensure that such an unskilled labour force is, in the long run up-skilled and empowered. Your arrangement to train the module panel cleaners and up-skill them is laudable.

As this is the first project in the province, many other renewable energy projects are earmarked for other parts of the province, including Brits, Christiana, Taung and Orkney. Such an investment in skills development will definitely not go to a waste.

There are numerous ways in which Momentous Energy can invest in surrounding communities. Education is but one area that cannot be ignored. The conditions under which learners in this province undergo schooling should also find your favourable consideration.

Through investment in education, you will be playing a meaningful role in the improvement of educational outcomes, particularly in fields of Mathematics and Science. Contributions towards school bursaries and improving school infrastructure are other ways in which the private sector is encouraged to intervene.

Compliance with transformation imperatives goes beyond “100% South African” ownership. Women empowerment is a transformation imperative that is often overlooked. It has been my observation in other projects that women are not adequately represented in managerial positions. Young people, alike, should be afforded such an opportunity.

While it should be appreciated that some women do get employed in construction and other areas, there should be fair representation of women in decision making organs and management echelons. Gone are the days when women were confined and compartmentalized to certain roles.

Ladies and Gentlemen

May this bring hope to the people of Rustenburg. May they enjoy the maximum benefits yielded by this project. We are under no illusion that when the expected project completion date comes, the community would have been empowered in numerous ways. The success of this project heavily relies on commitment to implementation and effective stakeholder engagement.

Once more, congratulations on this milestone. May this mark the beginning of greater things to come. May this herald an era and season of light. Let us continue to advocate for the harmless exploitation of all gifts of nature, as enjoined by the Momentous Energy motto: “Harnessing the African Sun”.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention