

Minister of Energy, Dikobe Ben Martins, MP:

**Address at the community engagement session on the Department of Energy's
Integrated Electrification Programme**

Mudavula Village, Thulamela Municipality, Limpopo Province

30 April 2014

Programme Director

Honourable Member of the Provincial Executive Council, Mr Ishmael Kgetjepe

Your Excellency Hosi Mudavula and other members of the institution of traditional leadership

Your Worship the Mayor of the Thulamela Municipality, Councillor Mahosi

Your Worship the Mayor of the Vhembe District Municipality, Councillor Tshitereke Mathibe

District and Local Councillors

Officials of the three spheres of government

Representatives of state owned companies, agencies and regulators

Industry stakeholders

Comrades

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Avuxeni!

Ndi matsheloni!

Good morning!

I am pleased to be part of this engagement between the community and government, as we seek to find ways to accelerate service delivery to improve the livelihoods of the people of the Mudavula village and the Thulamela Municipality as a whole.

Since 1912, the African National Congress has always emphasised the restoration of the dignity of the black majority as a requirement for the creation of a non-racial, non-sexist and a democratic South Africa.

Today, the commitment to restore the dignity of our people finds expression in the Constitution of the Republic South Africa. The Constitution enjoins South Africans to work together to create a new society founded on universal enjoyment of human rights, especially social and economic rights such as the right to food, health, education, safety and security for all.

Access to quality and affordable energy infrastructure and services enables the enjoyment of social and economic rights by all South Africans, irrespective of where they live. Since the advent of democracy, in 1994, the ANC led government has made progress to bring electrification and other energy services closer to the people, especially in rural areas.

This engagement today bears testimony to the strides we have made to improve the social and economic livelihoods of many South Africans.

When the ANC came to power in 1994, only 34% of South Africans had access to electricity. Today, twenty years later, the number of people with access to electricity is 86%. This means that the ANC led government has connected more people in twenty years than what the colonial and apartheid governments did in more than 100 years since the advent of white rule in South Africa.

Government has also subsidised basic electricity access for indigent households, benefitting many people, including the elderly and poor households.

Access to electricity and other forms of energy has improved the conditions of the people, especially in rural areas. Women do no longer have to fetch firewood in the veld to provide energy for their families. Learners do not have to use candles or paraffin to study at night. New economic opportunities have also been created as an outcome of the Department of Energy's Integrated Electrification Programme.

Since 2007/2008, the Department of Energy has invested over R300m towards electrification in the Thulamela Municipality. Through this allocation, the Thulamela Municipality and Eskom have connected 147 villages, amounting to over 40 000 households receiving electricity for the first time in their existence.

In the financial year 2014/2015, the Department of Energy has allocated R77 million to the Thulamela Municipality and Eskom to electrify further households.

Working with the municipalities and Eskom, the Department of Energy has a plan to connect the remaining households to ensure that we achieve universal access to electrification in the near future. Grid and non-grid solutions will be used to provide electrification to those who are still without electricity.

Programme Director,

The service delivery backlog remains enormous. Notwithstanding the achievements that we have made in the past twenty years of democracy, more still needs to be done to provide quality infrastructure and services to citizens.

The ANC led government is committed to continue rolling out infrastructure and services, focusing on infrastructure programmes that create opportunities for black South Africans and small businesses to enter the economic mainstream.

Yesterday, on the 29th of April, the Department of Energy engaged with local stakeholders from the local sphere government and the business fraternity on economic opportunities in the energy sector.

A number of energy opportunities were discussed, including the licensing of businesses to generate electricity and petroleum products from agricultural products. We also discussed the use of solar energy (from the sun) to generate electricity.

In this regard, I encourage traditional leaders, local businesses, youth and women enterprises and co-operatives, to follow up on these opportunities to ensure that we spread the benefits of the energy infrastructure programme beyond the golden triangle of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.

Working together, we have a responsibility to bring new investments to rural villages like Mudavula. This will allow us to redress the apartheid spatial development patterns.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It will be remiss for me not to conclude my address without referring to the current challenges facing the Thulamela Municipality. First, I wish to commend the decision of the greater Malamulele community to participate in the 2014 national elections.

Participating in a democratic election is one of the rights enshrined in our constitution. There is no doubt that your decision to participate in the elections will allow the ANC and the ANC led government to resolve the challenges facing the people of this area.

The ANC has wisdom and capacity to resolve even the most difficult of problems in the interest of the unity of our people. Divisions amongst black people can only serve to roll back the gains that we have made to create a democratic society.

This creates grounds for opportunistic elements in the opposition and new parties, who want power for its sake, to deepen divisions among the people who have lived together in peace, for many centuries.

I humbly implore the community of Malamulele to allow the government of President Jacob Zuma to attend to the issues that you have raised. President Zuma always attends to his commitments.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the commitment of the Department of Energy to work with all stakeholders in the Thulamela Municipality to accelerate the rollout of grid and non-grid electrification, and to localise available economic opportunities in the energy sector.

Working together we move South Africa forward!!!

I THANK YOU