

**SPEAKER'S NOTES OF THE MINISTER OF ENERGY, HONOURABLE DIKOBE
BEN MARTINS, MP, AT THE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT
MEETING**

Prieska, Siyathemba Local Municipality

Saturday, 15 February 2014

I am pleased to visit Prieska, Siyathemba Local Municipality, to engage you on the Department of Energy's initiative to build new energy infrastructure in this area.

The introduction of the renewable energy programme, in particular, enables us to redirect energy infrastructure development to under-serviced urban and rural areas in South Africa. Since 1994, the ANC government has worked with communities and relevant stakeholders to redress apartheid spatial development patterns.

Notwithstanding the progress that has been made, much still needs to be done to ensure that all South Africans have access to decent social and economic services where they stay and ideally within walking distances.

Our vision to create a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa is a factor of universal enjoyment of social and economic rights by all.

The ANC's continued commitment to create a national democratic society finds concrete expression in its 2014 election manifesto, which President Jacob Zuma presented to the public on the 11th of January 2014 in Mbombela, Mpumalanga.

Building on the achievements of the past twenty years of democracy, we remain resolute in our commitment to increase investments in critical infrastructure across different sectors of the economy, including energy, transport, and communications.

Investment in critical infrastructure is central to our plan to diversify growth and development. Energy infrastructure, in particular, enables investment in other sectors of the economy. It also facilitates access to essential public services such as health, education, water and security.

The Northern Cape is endowed with natural resources that includes in solar energy. With the advances in solar and other energy technologies, the potential exists to turn the vast expanse of the Northern Cape into significant economic zones with the potential to South Africa.

While traditional sources of energy such as coal will remain with us for a foreseeable period of time, the future lies in a balance with alternative sources, enabling the reduction of carbon emissions which lead to global warming. Available evidence suggests that global warming is responsible for some of the destructive weather patterns and disasters in the world.

Since the start of the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Programme (REIPPP), the Department of Energy has licensed forty seven (47) IPPs, over three bidding windows, making our country one of the leading nations in the move to new, cleaner sources of energy. The licensing process will continue as we seek to ensure that renewable energy contributes 42% of the energy mix by 2030.

The licensing of the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers (REIPP) has positioned the Northern Cape as the leading province in the introduction of alternative energy sources in South Africa. There are currently 31 licensed Independent Power Producers in the Northern Cape, three of which are in the environs of Prieska, in the Siyathemba Local Municipality.

South Africa is currently ranked number twelve in the world in terms of of its commitment to and implementation of renewable energy. South Africa has attained this position because of the transparent and credible bidding processes. As a result, R150 billion Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has been invested into the economy.

The Department of Energy continues to emphasise the need for renewable energy projects to benefit local communities, through job creation, internships, skills transfer and bursaries, social and local economic development. We are currently working with one of the state's Developmental Financial Institutions (DFIs), the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) to strengthen community participation and benefit in the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Programme (REIPP). This is done to ensure that licensed entities meet their socio-economic commitments that they made in their respective bids.

The Department of Energy is also exploring opportunities to create solar parks to encourage technology and infrastructure sharing amongst Independent Power Producers (IPPs), as a way to reduce the costs of infrastructure and consequently the price of energy. The Siyathemba Local Municipality has been identified as one of the pilot areas for the development of Solar Parks in South Africa.

The Department of Energy is presently finalising a report of the feasibility study of the area that was initially identified for the location of a Solar Park in this area. The outcome of the feasibility study will be made known to all affected parties.

Initial indications suggest the need to relocate the Solar Park project to another area, subject to engagement with other government departments, such as the Department of Rural Development and Land Affairs.

We encourage all stakeholders to continue working together to ensure that the change in the location of the Solar Park does not result in the project not being concluded. The project is important for economic development which the ANC government is resolute and committed to, to ensure economic growth and development.

The Department of Energy will continue to work with the Siyathemba Local Municipality and Eskom to provide electricity infrastructure and services to those communities and households that are not yet connected. Funds have been allocated for this purpose, and communities will be kept informed as progress is made in the electrification programme.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for giving me an audience.

I THANK YOU