

Declaration
Western Cape Public Participation Conference
22 July 2005.

We, the 1500 participants gathered at this Conference, being in active service of the people of the Western Cape and South Africa as elected representatives and government officials, ward committee members, CDWs and civil society, will strive to:

- Improve the lives of the poor through our programmes and projects
- Strengthen the relationship between government and all the people
- Build accountable and responsive local and provincial government
- Urgently deal with service delivery problems experienced by some communities

We believe that public participation is the key to ensuring that government understands the needs of the people and makes decisions that will meet those needs in the best possible way. We also believe that government alone cannot build a better life and that communities, community organisations, faith based organisations, business and all other sectors of our society have to be the partners of government. We commit ourselves to building a system of governance that encourages and uses participation and responds to the voices of the people. We will build a Batho Pele culture of service that limits delays caused by bureaucracy and complex procedures.

This conference recognises the progress already made by many municipalities as well as the shortcomings of some of our programmes. We will strive to make participation effective, interactive and meaningful and commit to the following key tasks:

- Developing coherent municipal strategies for ongoing communication and participation around all development and service projects with clear roles for councillors, officials, ward committees and CDWs
- Building consistent interaction with all sectors in our municipality through stakeholder forums, ward committees and community development workers

- Ensuring that our ward and other councillors remain in dynamic contact with the people in their wards and the community, with the help of ward committee members
- Empowering our ward committees and CDWs to monitor progress and report problems with delivery of services
- Setting up clear mechanisms for speedily addressing and reporting back on the community problems that ward committees, CDWs and our communities bring to the municipality
- Providing all possible financial, administrative and political support for the public participation process, including the work of ward committees and CDWs.
- Building the inter-governmental mechanisms needed to ensure that Local, District, Provincial and National government work together to speed up delivery and address the needs of our people.
- Supporting and strengthening our capacity to implement through cooperation between provincial and local government and SALGA.

In terms of immediate action, we undertake to:

- Ensure that ward committees are established in all wards within the next two months.
- Hold ward meetings where our ward councillors report to the people on the impact of the budget and IDP in their ward, within the next two months.
- Make immediate interventions to deal with serious service delivery problems and to communicate with affected communities about our plans.
- Within three months all Speakers in the Western Cape will report on the progress made in implementing ward committee and public participation programmes
- Within three months all Mayors in the Western Cape will report on the progress made in dealing with serious service delivery problems

Through these actions we will give expression to our quest to root government among the people.

