

# Address to the Gala Dinner on the Partnership Celebration with Gavle Municipality presented by the Executive Mayor of BCMM, Cllr Xola Pakati

15 March 2018

* **Programme Director**
* **Commissioner for Galve Municipality, Jan Myléu**
* **Speaker of the BCMM Council, Councillor Alfred Mtsi**
* **Councillor for Gavle Municipality, Eiran Cooper**
* **Commissioner in Opposition, Åsa Wiklund Lång**
* **Councillors from our City**
* **Representatives from Gavle youth structures**
* **Gavle Municipal officials present**
* **Municipal officials from our City**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening!**

It gives us great joy and pleasure to be hosting this celebration of our partnership with Galve Municipality. We are grateful to the Swedish delegation for having travelled such a long-distance for them to join us in celebrating 16 years since the beginning of our partnership.

It is very important to celebrate milestones as they serve as a reminder of the partnership and thus the need for its continued existence. We are therefore here celebrating a long-term partnership by both our municipalities in the service of humanity across time, space and geographical locations.

Whilst we are gathered to celebrate 16 years of our cooperation with Galve Municipality, we are in fact celebrating more than 60 years since the beginning of relations between our two countries, South African and Sweden.

It is a known fact that Swedish people unequivocally supported the struggle for the liberation of South Africa during the dark days of apartheid. This solidarity in the service of humanity became apparent in the late 1950s when Swedish Missionary, Gunnar Helander, was barred from entering South Africa due to his open support for the South African liberation struggle.

This did not stop the formation of the Swedish South Africa Committee which organised with the sole intention of discrediting the system of apartheid across the world. The distaste for oppression and the support for total liberation of Africans was shared by various sectors in the Swedish society. Swedish students even refused to eat South African fruit saying that it tasted ‘of blood’.

Interestingly, as we celebrate this partnership today, our country will next week on the 21st of March, celebrate Human Rights Day. This day is significant for us as South Africans but also for our partnership with the Swedish people as it will be 58 years since the Sharpeville Massacre where 69 black people were shot dead and 180 were wounded for merely protesting unjust laws.

The cruelty of this massacre showed the world the true reality of apartheid as a crime against humanity and this is why the solidarity with Swedish people from that point onwards was strengthened.

We are very appreciative of the fact that you have stayed true to your tradition of solidary in the service of humanity even after our democratic breakthrough in 1994.

The work that many Swedish cities are doing with many of our municipalities is proof of this fact and the milestones that we are celebrating in this dinner are key successes of our partnership. Your continued existence in our midst is a key ingredient to our success as a municipality and the people of buffalo city are very appreciative of that.

In the seminar that we jointly hosted during the day, I outlined the main success stories of our city ever since we started this partnership. I also highlighted the continued need for our cooperation to exist due to the huge challenges that our city continues to face.

The main needs and thus activities of mutual municipal priority underscored in our twinning agreement are still necessary. There is still a need for continued partnership regarding good governance, development planning, water management, land use management, social development, disaster management and youth support initiatives. We believe that this should exist even beyond the formal cooperation agreement between our cities.

We can be able to make positive interventions on all these priority areas if we continue to work together in the service of a higher purpose. We therefore need to increase the benefits that are accruing to our people due to our continued partnership. There should be more benefits to women in business, religious groups, sport and youth clubs.

As indicated in the seminar during the day, this partnership also needs to tackle the fundamental issues of economic production. It is very saddening that our economy as a city is heavily reliant on the automotive sector with Mercedes-Benz being the anchor. Apart from this, we are heavily reliant on government expenditure and this creates a very fragile economic reality.

It is for this reason that the city is coordinating a broad range of stakeholders with the sole intention of unlocking major economic activities in the city. We are trying to implement initiatives which will properly diversify our economic base and create a positive trade balance.

This is why were want this relationship to further mature to an even higher level. We are therefore hoping that many companies from Sweden will start investing in our city in their numbers, thus creating the required economic activity and creating jobs.

We are confident that with this long partnership that we have had, you can better express the reality of our city and thus cannot find a difficult of convincing a few of your companies to relocate to our city. We are an increasingly modern city, with great potential for growth of existing companies and the establishment of new ventures.

The city has the only river port in the country which is serviced by international shipping lines and we pride ourselves of having an award winning Special Economic Zone, the East London IDZ. We have a serious potential for tourism, more particularly around our coastline which spans around 68 kilometres. We request you to let your companies know that we are open for business.

**Conclusion**

Allow me to end by remind you that our country is this year celebrating a centenary since the birth of our struggle Icon Nelson Mandela. We should nurture and strengthen our cooperation in honour of his memory. Let me thus end by quoting his acknowledgement of the solidarity efforts of the world just over a year after he was released from 27 years in jail:

“We must therefore pay our tribute to the international community for its contribution to the struggle against racism and apartheid…Without such solidarity, we would not be walking the last mile to freedom.”

Let us therefore work together to make this freedom meaningful to our people. We hope that you are enjoying our city and we are looking forward to this continued partnership.

**I thank you!**