

# EL team at Namibia summit



*Chris Mbekela*

The Mayor, Councillor Lulamile Nazo, and the Council Support Manager, Mr Chris Mbekela, took off to Namibia in May this year to attend the Africities 2000 summit, the second of its kind to be held in Africa since the first one was held in 1998. The theme for the summit was “**Financing African Local Governments to Strengthen Democracy and Sustainable Development**”.

Mr Mbekela says the summit was officially opened by the President of the Republic of Namibia, His Excellency Dr Sam Nujoma. We asked the Mayor and Mr Mbekela, “Why was the summit so important?” They replied “Africa in particular is beginning to take the role of local governments in local economic growth and development more serious than ever before. This is the closest sphere of the government to communities and, to the people in particular.

In order to be able to translate the concept of African Renaissance into reality, African countries in particular have to have a well-informed common integrated approach to the evolution of local authorities and to the role that local authorities should play in the process of economic growth and development.

It is against this background that the African Countries decided to hold summits of this nature so as to have a common strategic vision and mission. Regions represented at the summit were Southern Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, West Africa and North Africa. All regions were fairly represented. South Africa within the Southern Africa Region had a representation of 75 people from various cities/towns”.

The delegates were broken into the following Commissions or discussion groups:

- The place occupied by African local economies within the context of globalisation,
- Their contribution to the regional integration,
- The relationship to be created between local economic developments on the one hand, and national and regional economic development strategies on the other hand,
- The National Economic Policies and Sustainable Local Economic Development,
- Reinforcing African Local Governments Resources Mobilization Capacity,
- Funding Infrastructure and Urban Services in Partnership,
- African Local Government's Access to Loans and financial Markets and,
- Women in Local Government.

Mbekela said the South African delegation was joined by a high-powered delegation from the central government and the provincial governments. Delegates from various countries were well received by the Namibians and by the Government of Namibia in particular.

The Safety and Security of all delegates was one of the main priorities and, indeed it was not difficult to do networking with other delegates. Windhoek is a very clean and peaceful country, he said. “By and large the trip to Namibia had afforded us the opportunity to be introduced to diverse intellectual thinking, cultural diversity and to Namibian indigenous beauty”.