

## **NO MUD-SLINGING IN PERSUANCE OF JAGGERSFONTEIN DEVELOPMENT**

On Tuesday, 09 May 2023, we joined Deputy President Paul Mashatile in his visit to Jagersfontein, Kopanong local municipality.

It is now common knowledge that the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2022 marked one of the darkest days in our province when a mine dam wall in Jagersfontein collapsed, resulting in damage to property and loss of life. The aftermath of this disaster resulted in many of our people being displaced and sadly, the loss of Mme Mantele Mokhadi, who is feared to have been swept away and buried under the sludge. To this very day, Mme Mokhadi has still not been found.

We have also, with the advice of the committee which has been set up, built houses for some of the victims, one of them being Mrs. Mosweu, whose husband Ralehana Aaron Mosoeu, sadly lost his life when the disaster struck. Eight months after the tragedy, the area is still gripped by fear, confusion and even anger.

We understand, all too well, these feelings because what happened on that fateful day, left deep physical and also emotional scars. We therefore welcomed the visit by Deputy President Mashatile to the area and offer residents a message of support. Much as we were, and are still scarred by the events of 11 September last year, we now have an opportunity to rebuild the area and put that tragic episode behind us. We want to turn the tragedy which befell us into a positive.

In the interim, we have engaged with the committee that has been set up. The committee, made up of Jagersfontein residents, is in constant communication with the Free State Provincial Government and both parties are constantly engaging on pressing matters in relation to the area. They handed their memorandum of demands to the Deputy President yesterday who has promised to give it to President Cyril Ramaphosa.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, we want to see a different Jagersfontein. A Jagersfontein free of pain, but one whose future will be determined by its inhabitants.

That Jagersfontein will be realised in the not-so-distant future. We are soon going to launch a solar project, worth lots of money, which will yield much needed jobs for the people of Jagersfontein. Agriculture remains an untapped market which we intend to fully utilise. The cultivation of HEMP, a type of cannabis, and has been used to manufacture a number of products such as textiles, clothing, shoes, paper and biofuel amongst others.

To keep our youth active and away from destructive elements, a sports facility will be constructed and completed in this financial year. The youth will be encouraged to participate in different sporting codes in the area, and former professional footballers will also provide coaching clinics and also act as scouts and recommend talented individuals to professional clubs.

These are some of the interventions in the pipeline. Our message to the people of Jagersfontein is to refuse to allow wedge drivers to sow divisions. We must never allow our problems to divide us. Instead, they must unite us into one. We are going to change the face of Jagersfontein, and Xhariep district in general. No more shall this beautiful town be synonymous with social ills such as crime, alcoholism and drug use.

A new dawn is upon us.

I thank you.