



Refilwe Mokgosi: AMEU President

Inauguration Speech at AMEU Convention

Date: 08 October 2018

The Honourable Minister of COGTA, Dr Zweli Mkhize

The Executive Mayor of City of Tshwane, Clr Solly Msimanga

MMC Clr Darryl Moss and all other MMCs present here,

Councillors,

City Manager of City of Tshwane, Mr. Moeketsi Mosola and all other City  
Manager present here,

Immediate past President of the AMEU, Mr Moferefere Tshabalala,

All AMEU past Presidents,

AMEU Executive Council,

ALL Executives, Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocol observed

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for the privilege He has bestowed upon my life.

I am honoured to be here as the new President of the Association of Municipal Electricity Utilities, at the 26<sup>th</sup> Technical Convention in our beautiful Capital City, hosted by the City of Tshwane.

I am delighted to welcome you all to this landmark convention, with the theme of:

***“The impact of the energy revolution on the power utilities in Africa “.***

Standing here to address you, I vividly recall 8 years ago when I became active within the AMEU. It gave me great joy and pleasure to work with likeminded people.

I was introduced to this association through Mr Hannes Roos, ex Ekurhuleni DH under the stewardship of Mr Mark Wilson. I was then nominated as the Energy HOD to represent Highveld branch as female rep at the AMEU Executive Council.

Four years later I was nominated to be the Vice President Elect by past president Mr Sicelo Xulu and the executive council. Immediately EXCO nominated me to lead the Women In Electricity programme. Colleagues thank you all for trusting me.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the immediate past president of the AMEU, Mr Moferefere Tshabalala for his leadership in the past two years.

To the Vice President Elect. Ms Jayshree Pershad and the AMEU EXCO, members and affiliates thank you for your support throughout in building towards this convention.

My kind gratitude goes out to the City of Tshwane, and let me tell you a little story, in 2014 when I accepted my offer one of the conditions was that the City would allow me to continue embark on my AMEU journey and they accepted.

Thank you to City of Tshwane Departmental Senior Management for your support and understating the demands of the Presidency.

MMC Clr Darryl Moss thank you for agreeing to host this convention.

Dear Delegates and all distinguished guests, I am conscious and aware, and appreciative that I take on this responsibility and the baton during a period wherein the sector is going through some significant challenges.

To list a few at the expense of repeating what the Hon Minister of CoGTA has already touched upon are:

1. The rising municipal debt especially debt owed to Eskom
2. Rising cost of electricity
3. The evolving changing business models for utilities to ensure survival also need to be looked at as a matter of priority.

Colleagues, there is a view that the current energy sales of kilowatt business model is “dead”.

4. The need to incorporate renewables onto municipality power grids
5. Challenges faced by municipalities with regard to revenue collection, overall funding and being under capacitated
6. The relationship between Eskom and munics, we need to have Service Delivery Agreement (“SDA”)
7. Aging infrastructure
8. Very important the Impact of the 4th Industrial Revolution on Utilities

Through this convention, I personally would like to see us engaging in an open and constructive manner with the aim to address these challenges.

If you look at the gap between the 1<sup>st</sup> Industrial Revolution and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Industrial Revolution we are talking about 100 years or so. Whereas the transaction between the 3<sup>rd</sup> Industrial Revolution and the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution is about 10 years apart. While we still trying to adjust and align ourselves the discussions around the 5<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution has already started.

Dear Delegates and all distinguished guests, I would like us to pause and reflect a bit on how technology has advanced over all these years.

- In 1804, Ricard Trevithick invents a steam locomotive.
- In 1879, Thomas Edison after his one thousand and one trials the light bulb was born. Talk about persistence!!
- Robert Khan and Vint Cerf, Introduced the incredible Internet to humanity.
- Charles Babbage, Invented the Computer.
- In the 1880's, Alexander Graham Bell invented a telephone.

- Karl Benz, Invented the first modern automobile.
- In the 1940's, Percy Spencer, Invented the microwave

All of the given examples, amongst others, have transformed our lives to the extent that we will not be able to imagine life without modern technology.

Notwithstanding, as exciting as these past **revolutions** have been, they brought along with them their own challenges, most are noticeable and I believe delegates you will concur. One of these challenges, to this day, remains pollution especially in the automobile factories which also eventually led to global warming.

We are now in the early stages of a new era, deemed the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. In retrospect all past revolutions appear like dress-rehearsals to the main event. According to scientists, soon we will be able to grow humans in laboratories and might even be able to download our brains onto computers. All of this is mind-boggling to say the least.

One speaker said “The 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution is changing how we live, work, and communicate. It is reshaping government, education, healthcare, and commerce almost every aspect of life. In the future, it can change the things we value and the way we value them.

A few questions that I want to pose to you all are:

1. Are we [the electricity supply industry] ready for the energy revolution and its impact?
2. Will the market respond quickly enough? The biggest risk involves not moving fast enough to seize new opportunities and adopt new hyper automated processes.
3. Is the industry turning a blind eye to issues such as cybersecurity? According to experts' data is now the new gold and so we will see a spike in data theft, site hijacking etc.
4. We have thousands of engineering students currently at universities. Will these students be employable in the next five years?

5. Do you think we are training and educating future employees in line with the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial Revolution?

In my presidency period I would like to see the sector and this association advancing in technology and investing in research and innovation.

I would also provide the leadership and stewardship:

- Wherein the AMEU (together with its chosen partners) plays a critical role in addressing the above-mentioned challenges I referred to earlier in my speech, especially embarking on initiatives and programmes that will ensure the continued and sustained financial viability of ALL Utilities
- We all know how crucial it is for the sector to accommodate females within the industry, I will, therefore, remain interested in the subject of women empowerment. Past President Mr Sicelo Xulu I will continue on furthering your presidential legacy of the empowerment of women through AMEU WiE programme you have initiated.
- Preparing the membership of the AMEU to effectively and efficiently face the impact of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution and have programmes that will assist government and the education system to align with the future.

Do you think as a country we are investing in the right future energy networks?

Honourable Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize, at this point in time, I feel I should be considerate and not only take a long pause here; but conclude my talk, so as not to deprive my colleagues an opportunity to fully debate these matters throughout these convention. I don't want to receive complaints later, that "Madame President, o re tseetse mafoko. Re ne re tla tlhola re bua re re'ng – ntle feela le gore, 'Ke la me leo!'"

In conclusion, I would make a terrible mistake if I take my seat without expressing my sincere gratitude to my family, ba ga Mogale le ba ga Mokgosi, for their support over the past years. No words can adequately explain my appreciation in this regard.

On that note, to my husband, Tiro, I wouldn't be where I am today without your encouragement, love and belief in my capabilities, Thank you, my love! Equally I thank our children, Kamohelo and Khumo.

From my work perspective, a big thank you Senior Management, and colleagues from all the departments, I extremely value your support, and I know, going forward, I can keep on depending on your guidance and remarkable support.

Should I have not mentioned you by name, please know that you too, are acknowledged.

Looking at this convention room I see many faces that have impacted my life, supported and mentored me through my career journey, and assisted me to be a person I am today and when I get chance I will personally thank you.

On that note ...thank you and please enjoy the Convention further.