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EXECUTIVE MAYOR, CLLR DADA MORERO, SPEECH AT THE CITY POWER ENERGY INDABA 2025

“Future, Policy, Partnership, and People: Powering a Just Energy Transition for South Africa”

Good morning, esteemed delegates,
Innovator and Partners

It is both an honour and a responsibility to welcome you to the City Power Energy Indaba 2025 — a gathering that embodies Johannesburg’s determination to lead not only the city’s transformation but also the nation’s energy renewal.

This is no ordinary conference. It is a national call to imagination — a collective space to rethink how power is produced, owned, distributed, and governed in South Africa.

It is about reshaping the energy system not as a utility framework, but as a social compact, grounded in equity, innovation, and democratic participation.

Reimagining Power in a Changing Nation

South Africa stands at a defining crossroads.

Our national energy landscape — once dominated by a single utility model — is undergoing structural change. The old system, built on centralised coal generation and state monopolies, is no longer fit for purpose in a society that demands decentralisation, inclusion, and sustainability.

For decades, energy has mirrored inequality: access divided by geography, reliability divided by income, and benefit divided by privilege.

But the cracks in the system have also opened pathways for innovation, agency, and reform.

What we face today is not merely an energy crisis, but a crisis of imagination — and the solution lies not in managing decline, but in governing transformation.

From Energy Scarcity to Energy Democracy

The future must be democratic in ownership and diverse in generation.

This is what energy democracy means in the South African context:

- It is not about replacing one monopoly with another, but about building a decentralised ecosystem of public, private, and community energy producers.

- It is about enabling every citizen — from a township entrepreneur to a rural cooperative — to generate and trade clean power.
- It is about ensuring that the benefits of the energy transition reach those who have borne the brunt of exclusion.

In this new paradigm, City Power is not merely Johannesburg's utility; it is a national prototype for what a 21st-century energy institution must become: Decentralised, digitised, decarbonised, and democratised.

Building the Low-Carbon Economy from the Ground Up

South Africa's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 cannot be delivered through rhetoric — it requires a new kind of partnership among the state, the market, and society.

Our Climate Action Plan and Balanced Just Energy Transition (BJET) approach show how that can be achieved in practice:

- Renewable integration through municipal-led generation and embedded power purchase agreements.
- Electrification of transport through public EV infrastructure.
- Energy efficiency retrofits across schools, clinics, and municipal buildings; and
- Green manufacturing and localisation to create jobs in solar, battery, and waste-to-energy industries.

Each of these pillars connects the local to the national — proving that energy transition is not a metropolitan privilege, but a national development opportunity.

From Crisis Management to Systemic Transformation

For over a decade, South Africa's public discourse on energy has been dominated by crisis — load-shedding schedules, debt restructuring, and emergency procurement. But crises can also clarify priorities.

What we need now is not another bailout plan, but a blueprint for transformation — a long-term vision where:

- National and municipal energy entities work in synchrony.
- Regulatory frameworks enable local generation and trading.
- Public–private partnerships are governed transparently and equitably; and
- Energy investment becomes a driver of social justice, not social division.

Johannesburg's Waste-to-Energy (AWTT) and Landfill Gas-to-Energy projects, worth over R5.7 billion, are proof of what this future can look like.

They demonstrate that innovation, governance, and inclusion can co-exist — and that municipal action can catalyse national outcomes.

The Future of City Power: From Utility to Movement

To achieve transformation at a societal scale, City Power must evolve from a conventional distributor into a public innovation platform — a catalyst for the low-carbon economy.

That means:

- Integrating digital grids and AI-based load management to improve efficiency;
- Introducing peer-to-peer trading models where residents and businesses can sell surplus energy.
- Creating community energy trusts that reinvest profits into local development; and
- Positioning City Power as a national thought leader in green finance, climate governance, and infrastructure renewal.

This is how Johannesburg becomes the proof point — showing how local entities can drive systemic transformation across South Africa.

Policy, Partnership, and Institutional Renewal

At the heart of this transformation lies policy coherence. Energy reform cannot succeed in isolation. It must be integrated with spatial development, industrial policy, and skills development.

That is why Johannesburg, through its Energy and Climate Action Framework, aligns local implementation with national priorities under the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan (JET-IP) and National Infrastructure Plan 2050.

Through the Gauteng Energy War Room, the City collaborates with the Province, the Presidency, and development financiers such as the DBSA to coordinate investments, resolve regulatory bottlenecks, and accelerate the rollout of renewable energy.

The message is clear: Transformation happens when partnerships become institutions — and institutions become enablers of justice.

Energy as a Social Compact: Women, Youth, and Inclusion

True transformation cannot be technocratic; it must be human-centred.

As we build this low-carbon economy, we must also create a skills revolution — ensuring that women and youth are not spectators, but participants in the new energy economy. Through our EPWP green programmes, local training academies, and partnerships with TVET colleges, we are creating pathways for jobs in solar maintenance, digital energy analytics, and EV technology.

The energy transition must therefore be understood not just as an environmental project, but as a project of economic justice and social renewal.

The National Imperative: From Fragmentation to a New Social Contract

If Johannesburg represents the local frontier of innovation, then South Africa must represent the national frontier of courage.

We must move beyond short-term fixes and toward structural reform—a national social contract that redefines energy as a public good rather than a private commodity. This requires rebuilding trust in public institutions, rethinking ownership models, and empowering local governments to co-produce solutions.

It means accepting that decentralisation is not fragmentation — it is empowerment.

That democratisation of energy is not a loss of control — it is the expansion of capability. And that a low-carbon economy is not an elite project — it is the foundation for a new developmental state.

Looking Ahead: Net-Zero 2050 and Beyond

By 2050, South Africa must be a nation where:

- Every province and city generates a share of its own renewable energy.
- Every household can participate in the energy market.
- Every enterprise thrives on efficient, clean, and resilient infrastructure; and
- Every public entity — from Eskom to City Power — is aligned to the same democratic mission: to power people, not just grids.

That is the energy future we must build — collectively, courageously, and urgently.

Closing: Power with Purpose

As we gather at this Indaba, let us not only discuss energy; let us redefine it. Let us reimagine power not as voltage or capacity, but as agency — the collective capacity of a nation to change its destiny.

May this Indaba be remembered as the moment when Johannesburg redefined the role of a city, and when South Africa rediscovered its power to lead — not through fossil fuels or financial muscle, but through vision, innovation, and solidarity.

Because in the end, our goal is not just to keep the lights on. It is to illuminate a new social order — one powered by justice, equity, and hope.

I am delighted to confirm that Joburg has developed five (5) Solar Farms. This is a confirmation that Joburg is on the right path in reclaiming its status as the City of First.

Together, we will not only power South Africa. We will empower it.

Thank you.