

SPEECH BY DAN PLATO

NATIONAL BLUE FLAG LAUNCH

29 OCTOBER 2009

Good day (INSERT PROTOCOL)

Today we are here to celebrate one of the most important reasons why living or spending time in Cape Town is such a pleasure: our beautiful beaches.

For the past eight years the City has been part of the internationally-renowned Blue Flag programme, which recognises the top beaches in the world for excellence in safety, amenities, cleanliness and environmental standards.

Last summer, the City had six beaches awarded Blue Flag accreditation, namely, Bikini, Mnandi, Strandfontein, Muizenberg, Camps Bay, and Clifton 4th Beach. This summer the City applied for Blue Flag accreditation for the same beaches, but with the addition of Big Bay.

The large number of Blue Flag beaches in Cape Town is a big pat on the back for us at the City of Cape Town, and for all of our partners involved in making sure Cape Town stays a premium global tourism destination. It means we are doing our jobs, and we are doing them well.

The Blue Flag awards are also an indication that many other things are going right, for example our waste water management. Cape Town recently received seven of the 32 green drop certificates in the country for its excellent waste water treatment plants, and four blue drop certificates for water quality.

This is particularly important ahead of the World Cup, and it is reassuring to see that every aspect of our city will be functioning at its best next year. We now need to get ready to capitalise on our achievements. I want us to ensure that these Blue Flag awards lead to more people visiting Cape Town in the future.

This does not mean we are in a competition with the rest of the country, because tourism benefits us all. Next year we need to be able to show visitors the incredible range of opportunities that await them in this country. Part of that wide appeal will be the fact that we are the only country outside Europe to have received Blue Flag accreditation, with 19 Blue Flag beaches across our coastlines. And I believe we can expect that number to increase as more municipalities get involved.

The Blue Flag beaches are not just about the visitors. The awards are about giving us one more reason to appreciate living in South Africa, and one more area in which we are holding ourselves to the highest international standards.

Cape Town is particularly proud of the fact that our best beaches are not just being used by foreign tourists. Mnandi and Strandfontein beach are on the False Bay coastline and have traditionally been frequented by our previously disadvantaged communities. The restriction of South Africa's beaches to particular racial groups was one of the most visible symbols of Apartheid, and I am proud to say that we are moving away from that past in a decisive way.

The Blue Flag beaches are just one of many achievements South Africans can be proud of, and I know that we will see many more just in this very next year.