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## MEDIA STATEMENT

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Date: Tuesday, 25 May 2022

Attention: Journalists, News Editors and Executive Producers

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### MPUMALANGA HOSTS THE PROVINCIAL ENERGY SUMMIT AND LAUNCHES THE MPUMALANGA GREEN CLUSTER AGENCY

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**eMalahleni** – The Mpumalanga Provincial Government hosted a two-day Energy Summit at the Ridge Hotel in eMalahleni from 24-25 May 2022. The hosting of the Summit is in response to the Premier’s State of the Province Address 2022, wherein she committed that government would bring all relevant stakeholders together, to pave the way for the adoption of the *Just Energy Transition* towards renewable energy.

When officially opening the Summit on Tuesday, 24 May 2022, Mpumalanga Premier, Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane said the Province was committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing the energy mix, incorporating renewal energy.

“In the Mpumalanga Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (MERRP), we have included a Pillar called ‘*Sufficient, secure and reliable energy supply and green economy initiatives*’, to recognise the Province’s existing role and necessary preparations for an increased focus on renewables as part of reducing emissions”, explained the Premier.

The *Just Energy Transition* provides the creation of massive new job opportunities in the green economy. The Energy Summit sought to achieve the following objectives, namely to:

- Support and create pathways for a “Just Transition” in Mpumalanga (social justice and equal opportunities);
- Build and support a local green economy network and industry;
- Provide policy support to entrench the Mpumalanga Province as a great place for green economy businesses;
- Build relationships with financiers and financial institutions to understand the opportunity to deploy capital in Mpumalanga’s Just Transition;
- Ensure appropriate, accurate delivery of green economy skills training and development;
- Drive appropriate local content and trade opportunities for the manufacturing of green technology components;
- Create an ecosystem of supportive of the Green Economy growing new jobs and new opportunities in the region; and
- Create a platform for policy harmonisation.

Ms Mtshweni-Tsipane further committed the government to strive to protect the livelihoods of the people, after realising the impact of moving away from coal-power energy generation; hence the decision to rather provide the energy mix, including continuing with fossil fuels.

“Without a doubt, the ramifications of our efforts to move away from fossil fuels, especially coal, will be felt in eMalahleni, Steve Tshwete, Govan Mbeki and Msukaligwa. Transitioning to a low-carbon economy, less reliant on fossil-fuels will have a devastating impact on individuals and communities in these areas unless proactive and deliberate actions are taken”, added Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane.

During the first day of the Summit, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, represented by the Acting Head, Ms Gugu Mashiteng, renewed and signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Eskom, represented by Eskom CEO, Mr André de Ruyter, which will focus on collaborating on the following:

- 1) Firstly, the *Just Energy Transition*, focusing on specific projects dealing with the repurposing and repowering of the existing coal fired power stations, and identifying manufacturing and other opportunities;
- 2) Secondly, possibly establishing the second SEZ within in the Province, which will be anchored on localised manufacturing capacity on the *Just Energy Transition*, especially on the manufacturing of solar panels and wind infrastructure components; and
- 3) Lastly, to collaboratively deal with the circular economy, especially in utilising the waste in the form of fly-ash and gypsum, in the production of other products like bricks, pavers and other products like cement and paint.

The MOA is designed to stimulate support and development of local SMMEs to participate in the opportunities being created. Responding to the signed MOA with Eskom, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane indicated that this is an indication of the Provincial Government’s commitment to continue with partnerships in securing energy for the people of the Province.

“It is our intention that such partnerships must assist, not only the transition to a carbon neutral economy, but also increase much needed energy security through fostering renewable energy production, repurpose power stations and explore ways for creating opportunities for small businesses and decent work.

“I commend Eskom for releasing land in our Province, for electricity projects under 100 Mega Watts, that can now be built without a licence and wheel electricity through the grid for self-consumption, or for sale to third-party consumers”, added the Premier.

The launch of the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency (MGCA) by the MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism, Mr Vusi Mkhathshwa, was one of the highlights of the Summit. Mkhathshwa hailed the creation of the Agency by indicating that “it will assist us to increase energy sources in the Province, more significantly that these sources are derived from renewal and green sources. This will further boost our Province’s prospects for job creation and investment attraction in the green economy”. The MGCA is a non-profit organisation which seeks to: (1) advance sustainable and inclusive green economy, and shared value in the Province; (2) create an enabling environment to catalyse job creation through the creation of green jobs; (3) propel investment in the green economy; and (4) work with and support green-tech SMMEs.

Delivering the closing remarks, MEC Mkhathshwa mandated the MGCA to ensure that work on the establishment of a wind farm in the Province, commences in earnest. He further urged the Agency to strive to attract international investors in the green energy space into the Province, adding that the MGCA should also support local companies.

“I would like to see ground broken on a wind farm in Mpumalanga in the next 18 months, and that municipalities are ready to participate in this space, both in term of supporting manufacturing and creating an enabling environment for embedded generation and wheeling”, urged Mr. Mkhathshwa.

The Summit was attended by MECs, Executive Mayors, diplomats from the Kingdom of Denmark, Britain, European Union, Kingdom of Netherlands, Germany, Finland, France, Portugal and New Zealand; World Bank’s Country Director, amongst others.

**ENDS**

***Issued jointly by the Office of the Premier and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism***

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