

ADDRESS BY MPUMALANGA MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR MN MOKOENA TO THE NCOP ON THE OCCASSION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS BUDGET VOTE DEBATE, CAPE TOWN

6 June 2012

- **Honourable Chairperson,**
- **Honourable Minister Molewa;**
- **Honourable Members of the House;**
- **My Colleagues, all MPL's in our midst;**
- **Distinguished guests;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Good Morning!

Chairperson, it is once again a distinct honour and privilege to address this Chamber to pronounce the submission of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government on the Department of Environmental Affairs 2012/13 Budget Vote.

Chairperson, the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa's budget vote speech commitments for 2012/13 financial year specific to Environmental Affairs give effect to environmental rights which are firmly entrenched in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

The Constitutional provisions provide basis for both individuals and communities to defend their right to a safe and sound environment and to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations. In that respect we wish to thank her Leadership and guidance on Environmental Issues.

The budget vote speech dealt also with the critical mandate of Government on the environmental dimensions of development challenges facing the country, Africa and the global community, these included amongst others Environmental Empowerment, Green Economy and Jobs.

Green Economy and Jobs

Chairperson, The global financial crisis that began in 2007 is still resonant today and one of the key lessons we can draw from this experience is that running economies the way we've always done, doing business as usual, is clearly not an option.

In the 2009 framework response to the international economic crisis, the South African government urged for the development of incentives for investment in programmes geared at creating large number of 'green jobs', i.e. employment in industries and facilities that are designed to mitigate impacts to the environment and natural systems and the protection thereof.

The new Green Economy is therefore a proposal for an alternative and far more sustainable way of doing business.

A green economy is described as one whose is driven by state and private-sector investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhances energy and resource efficiency, and prevents the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Accordingly a green economy offers major growth opportunities as well as environmental and social benefits, including the creation of new green jobs, and is vital to solving common global challenges such as combating climate change and promoting sustainable development.

Green Economy is about sustainable energy, green jobs, low carbon economies, green policies, green buildings, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, industry, energy efficiency, sustainable tourism, sustainable transport, waste management, water efficiency and all other resource efficiency.

To give it a meaning to the ordinary man in the street, Green Economy is about three fundamental principles namely:

- Culture which balances consumption and sustainability
- Energy efficiency and alternate sources of energy.
- Clearer Technologies which seek to lower carbon emissions.

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

Chairperson, it is our considered position that, natural resources are national economic assets. The economy of **Mpumalanga** depends heavily on energy and mineral resources, biodiversity, agriculture, forestry and eco-tourism. Functioning ecosystems underpin all economic and social activity. Ecosystem failure will seriously compromise our ability to address social and economic priorities even in a short term. Kristal Maze, Chief Director (SANBI) mentioned that “Managing biodiversity and ecosystems allows the opportunity to create thousands of jobs and deliver on South Africa’s new growth-path framework.”

The Mpumalanga Government is one of the signatories to the Mpumalanga’s Climate Change Declaration that was signed during the Mpumalanga Climate Change Summit; 6 & 7 October 2011. The signatories acknowledged the reality and importance of climate change and they declared their commitment to promote the development of a green economy.

The Province is exploring a number of green economy initiatives aimed at lowering the carbon footprint thus mitigating climate change whilst creating jobs at the same time.

Those include amongst others, investigations on the following opportunities, **production of products using fly-ash, alternative energy from bio-mass and production of bio-fuel, the manufacture of photovoltaic cells, implementation of the waste management hierarchy.**

An initiative that we are watching with interest is the current tests being run by Anglo Platinum (AMPLATS) with regards to the new technology for powering its locomotives using fuel cells. The success of this has far reaching positive consequences for both the environment as well as the creation of jobs via supplies to this new potential industry.

Noting that the transition from a carbon intensive Industrial development towards a low carbon economy is one of the key aspects for the successful rollout of the MEGDP. To this end other key performance areas for the Province include:

- The compilation of an Integrated Renewable Energy Potential Map
- An appraisal exercise of the economic feasibility of the most favourable renewable energy options as a critical component of the energy production sector.

- The formalisation of the waste management sector, and in particular providing a framework and appropriate infrastructure and mechanism for trade in reclaimable waste commodities.

Honourable Members, equally important, is the participation of potential investors and entrepreneurs in these initiatives.

As highlighted in our 2012/13 policy and budget for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism that the Green Economy is one of the key drivers for economic development and growth in Mpumalanga. It is further mainstreamed in Outcomes 4 and 10 as well as in the Mpumalanga Economic Development and Growth Path's Programme of Action.

ENVIRONMENTAL EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment processes around environmental and developmental issues and challenges have been recognized as crucial in working towards sustainable development locally, regionally and globally. Environmental empowerment is a process which enables individuals and communities to engage with the daily and immediate issues and risks that confront the total environment (biophysical, social, political, and economic).

Climate change is arguably the greatest challenges to modern human civilization, with large impacts on socioeconomic, environmental, mining and development related sectors, including water resources, agriculture and food security, human health, ecosystems and biodiversity, and that budget vote speech under discussion had to place high on the agenda.

Taking the aforementioned information into account, it is evident that Environmental empowerment and Environmental capacity building on Climate Change is pivotal in achieving government's Outcome 10's output 2 - *reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, climate change impacts and improved air/atmospheric quality.*

This explains why, in the 2011/12 budgetary year Mpumalanga has embarked on the development and implementation of a **Climate Change Literacy Programme** that was very successful. Fifty four sessions were facilitated. A Manual to assist in the facilitation of the Climate Change Literacy programme was developed and printed as well as a Climate Change board game. With the support of partners in private business Mpumalanga planted 9187 trees in 2011/12 to mitigate Climate Change and exceeded the 5000 trees target set.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The perception that Environmental impact assessments impact on development negatively by slowing down development still persists in some quarters. The importance of the contribution of ecological goods and services towards sustainable development is still not recognized by many developers. The necessity of including environment into development budgeting therefore remains a challenge.

Mpumalanga will continue to implement the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations while promoting the necessity of including the value of environmental goods and services in sustainable development.

As a Province we welcome the envisaged National Mining and Bio-diversity guidelines due to be co-launched by both the Minister of Mineral Resources, Ms Susan Shabangu and Minister of Environmental and Water Affairs, Ms Edna Molewa, later this year, and the integrated Authorisation process announced in the same budget vote speech.

As I indicated earlier on, Mpumalanga has made steady progress in the execution of its mandate.

The main areas of focus include integrated waste management; air quality management and instituting protocols towards the management of the Province's aspects and operations that contribute to climate change. The Provincial Climate Change Response Strategic Framework will also be finalised.

In the next-coming financial year, Mpumalanga will aim to achieve the completion of the feasibility study aimed at modelling international best practice on waste management. The provincial integrated waste management plan and the provincial air quality management planning framework should be finalised.

ENVIRONMENTAL (INTEGRATED) PLANNING

Mpumalanga will promote Cooperative Environmental Governance through various established forums (i.e. Mintech Working Group 3, CEC Sub-Committee, etc.); coordinate EIP Annual Reporting and consultation; and coordinate a Strategic Approach to Mining in Mpumalanga.

We also note with appreciation the planned launch of the National Biodiversity assessment Report later this month, I am certain the report will place us as a country in a sound scientific position to identify which areas of the country need the most urgent attention and protection.

Rhino Poaching

Chairperson, the budget vote we are debating in this August Chamber, could not have been concluded better than raising the issue of the rhino poaching which has been put under the international radar. The big question is what are we doing about it, and Minister Molewa has outlined some of the National and Cross-border measures being taken.

As a Province, which is also hard hit by this scourge, in addition to our efforts on wildlife protection, we also implemented strategies such as de-horning and DNA profiling our rhino population in Provincial Reserves.

I would like to indicate that while de-horning is not a permanent solution as the Rhino horn grows back after sometime, it has however become a useful deterrent. DNA profiling on the other hand improves statistical probabilities of conviction during prosecution of poaching cases.

Working with other law enforcement agencies, and wide range of stakeholders including local communities, we are certain that, this area of our work requires more support going forward, and the Ministers initiatives in this regard are spot on and must be supported.

Sustainability of future growth and development will rely profoundly on innovation, improved economic, energy and natural resource efficiency, better fiscal policies providing incentives for sustainability, comprehensive wealth accounting and valuation of ecosystem services, equitable access and inclusive political processes and the capacity to create sufficient decent work.

Once again Chairperson, As a Province we wish to give the budget vote on Environmental Affairs the thumbs up, hopefully it will secure the indulgence of the house.

Thank you