

SPEECH PRESENTED BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR NORMAN MOKOENA, MPL, DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE TOURISM MONTH 2011 AT KHETHIWE PARK AT SIYABUSWA, DR J.S MOROKA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Friday, 16 September 2011

Programme Director,

Ikosi Mahlangu;

The Head of Department, Dr Vusanani Dlamini;

Acting CEO of *MTPA*, Dr Nthabiseng Motete;

Our Stakeholders in the tourism industry;

Senior Management and officials from the Department and the *MTPA*;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Lotjani! Thobela!

Political Introduction by John Sikhosana

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Our mandate, collectively as stakeholders in tourism, in terms of the National Tourism Act, Act No 72 of 1993 is to:

- Firstly, contribute towards economic growth and increase the GDP contribution of tourism into the economy;
- Secondly, contribute towards job creation; and
- Thirdly, facilitate transformation within the tourism industry

In this regard, the *MTPA* has been given a responsibility of growing tourism in the province, so as to contribute towards the achievement of the mandates set out Tourism Act. The *MTPA*'s major role is therefore, to create awareness about Mpumalanga as a tourist destination and market its product offerings to both the consumers and tourism trade. The entity needs to profile, position and market '*Destination Mpumalanga*' to both the domestic and targeted international markets.

These awareness creation initiatives that the *MTPA* embarks upon from time to time are meant to create an enabling environment for industry players to market their products and services. I must also emphasise that the *MTPA* has a duty to the tourism industry, in terms of creating hype and excitement about the destination, to the ultimate consumers. It is thus significant that the *MTPA* and the tourism industry must work together so as to agree on broad principles, such as target markets and platforms, to ensure that both parties compliment each other's efforts.

Both parties must therefore, amongst others, commit to:

- Identify key platforms for marketing the province by using available platforms such as the annual *Tourism Indaba*, and arrange for some of key stakeholders to exhibit their products during the event, thereby promoting our province;
- Purchase advertising space in various media platforms like radio, television, online, social networking media, print and outdoor media to profile the province and make it appealing to the ultimate consumer.

The *MTPA* also has to identify crowd-pulling events, with a great potential of generating revenue for the tourism industry specifically, and the province in general, for the purpose of staging such events in the province.

We must continue to partner with media houses in this regard, and continuously host tourism journalists, both domestic and international, in order to expose them to our tourism offerings. This will give us a mileage, hence I believe that they will thereafter write about their experiences of our beautiful and welcoming Province.

We must further partner with people of note, commonly referred to as celebrities, who will become our tourism ambassadors.

Provincial Tourism Performance and its impact on the economy

Ladies and gentlemen;

Our tourism industry employed 113,837 people in 2010 as against 103,776 people in 2009. It contributed R4.6 billion to the provincial GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 2010.

Destination Mpumalanga is ranked number three (3) of the nine (9) provinces, in terms of international arrivals; and has unfortunately slipped down to position number eight (8) from position number six (6), in terms of domestic travel. We must therefore join hands and pull all stops to claim at least the number third spot. Our picturesque province has all it takes to climb to that elusive higher spot in terms of domestic tourism.

We continue to be the favourite international destination for tourists coming from Mozambique, Swaziland, the USA, the United Kingdom and France. Locally, our key domestic source markets are Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

September is Tourism Month

In an endeavour to promote tourism across South Africa, the month of September has been declared the *Tourism Month*. This is a national programme initiated by the National Department of Tourism, which is aimed at encouraging South Africans to travel within their own country, that is, to encourage domestic travel. The *Tourism Month* is also meant to promote the least visited areas by tourists within our respective areas. All activities during this month will culminate in the celebrations of the *World Tourism Day* which is hosted by the Free State Province at Clarens on the 27th of September 2011.

The theme for this year's celebration, which has been determined by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), is ***LINKING TOURISM TO CULTURES***. Through this theme, Provinces are expected to run activities aimed at raising awareness about tourism and in so doing encourage domestic and intra-provincial travel.

It is now my pleasure to announce some of the planned activities, to be carried out under the banner of the *MTPA*, for the 2011 *Tourism Month*:

1. Media tour

Following this launch, we have organised a media tour to expose journalists to our culture and heritage in this least visited part of our province, the Nkangala District. They will amongst others, visit the place of Ndebele culture and painting icon, *uMama* Esther Mahlangu and the Zithabiseni Resort where they will put up tonight. You will recall that *uMama* Esther Mahlangu is world renowned for having painted a BMW car in Ndebele colours, and we are proud to indicate that her artistic work in this regard is being displayed at the BMW Museum in Germany.

2. Township tourism Promotion

In an effort to highlight and profile township tourism, the *MTPA* in partnership with the SABC will activate this programme at Mkhuhlu township near Hazyview on 25 September 2011. The objective is to promote township tourism and showcase various activities that tourists can engage in. Our townships in the province are not as frequented by tourist as other townships like Soweto or Khayelitsha. Although at the moment one township has been identified for the activities of this month, the plan is to profile other key townships within the province in future.

3. Metro FM Music Awards Launch

Our province has committed to again host and sponsor the annual Metro-fm Awards, which will take place later in November this year. The *MTPA* will work closely with the SABC to launch this year's event during the week of 27-30 September 2011 in Nelspruit.

4. Launch of the Regional Brand

The launch of the new regional brand incorporating Swaziland, Mozambique and Mpumalanga will be launched in Maputo on 30 September 2011. The venue for the launch is Polana Hotel. The three tourism entities from the three (3) countries have been working on the development of the brand for the past year and the Regional Brand strategy has now been developed. This initiative is seen as an effort to compliment all the other promotional and marketing efforts done by each entity in an effort to increase travel into this region.

MTPA's Future Plans

Moving forward, the *MTPA* is planning to focus the promotion and marketing efforts mainly on the domestic and African markets. Statistics reflect that the Africa and the domestic markets are our major source of tourists, and therefore there is a great need to defend our market share and still endeavour to grow further this market.

It is our commitment, to continue to play a leadership role within the tourism industry in the province by creating an enabling environment for operations.

We plan to also bid for big events and conferences with the objective of hosting them in order to grow tourist arrivals. Provinces like Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape derive a lot of benefit in terms of tourist numbers and revenue out of hosting such big events.

On the international market level, we will continue to target markets like the UK and Germany, given that we are already receiving a great number of tourists from.

We also embark on aggressive marketing campaigns in the BRIC (Britain, Russia, India and China) countries as they are the future of tourism globally.

Closing

Political closing by John Sikhosana

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