

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR NORMAN MOKOENA, MPL DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE 2012 TOURISM MONTH AT CASAMBO LODGE IN KARINO, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Wednesday, 05 September 2012

Programme Director;
Chairperson of the MTPA Board, Mr Jerry Ngomane;
Acting CEO of the MTPA, Mr Edward Thwala;
Tourism industry stakeholders;
Regional Tourism Organisations;
Product owners;
Members of the media;
Distinguished guests;
Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Evening

Theme: "Tourism and Sustainable Energy – Powering Sustainable Development"

Every year, the month of September has been set aside to promote domestic tourism in order to encourage South Africans to visit and explore their own country. During the same month, the world celebrates ***World Tourism Day*** on the 27th of September under the banner of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (*the UNWTO*), which is the UN's agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. This period is also meant to celebrate and create awareness on the enormous contribution that the tourism industry makes to the provincial and national economic growth and job creation.

The UNWTO believes that celebrating World Tourism Day on September 27 is appropriate because it comes at the end of the high tourist season in the northern hemisphere, and the start of the tourist season in the southern hemisphere, when tourism is of contemporary interest to many people worldwide, particularly travellers and those working in the tourism sector.

In South Africa, the hosting of these celebrations traditionally rotate in the less visited provinces with the aim of addressing geographic spread through raising awareness of the hidden treasures in those provinces. This is a Government-wide programme led by the National Department of Tourism (*the NDT*) and coordinated at Provincial Government level. Our province has therefore been classified under the six less visited provinces in terms of the domestic tourism in South Africa. Many tourism enterprises and organizations, as well as government agencies with a special interest in tourism, also celebrate the month with various special events and festivities.

For this year, *the UNWTO* has adopted the theme for the month as: ***"Tourism and Sustainable Energy – Powering Sustainable Development."***

What this theme aims to communicate is that:

- Energy is a vital resource for tourism development as it is integral to accommodating and transporting tourists;
- The sustainable use of energy within the tourism sector is pivotal for the competitiveness and sustainability of the sector;
- The *NDT* has a programme on Tourism Greening and Climate Change which is aimed at promoting efficient use of natural resources such as energy and water;
- The *NDT* in partnership with Eskom, the Department of Environmental Affairs and the Department of Water Affairs conducted resource efficiency and tourism greening workshops in the 2011/12 financial year. The aim of those workshops were to educate and create awareness on resource efficiency within the tourism sector;

- The *NDT* together with stakeholders in the sector have also developed a National Tourism and Climate Change Response Programme and Action Plan, to ensure that the tourism sector responds effectively to the challenge of climate change;
- The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through the implementation of energy efficiency measures is a major focus of the sector's Climate Change Response Programme;
- A brochure on Tourism and Climate Change has been developed to create awareness for industry role players;
- The National Minimum Standard for Responsible Tourism (NMSRT) also supports the implementation of energy efficiency by tourism establishments through its environmental criteria;
- Humanity has to start living more sustainably (in terms of energy use, natural resources use) if the planet is to survive and support life;
- True sustainability takes into consideration far more than just the environment in which we live – it starts with us;
- True sustainability is not only about limiting negative impact, but rather about amplifying positivity; and that
- True sustainability is the intangible goodwill that emanates deep within our soul that brightens another person's day and makes our world a better and happier place.

Our aim in celebrating the Tourism Month is to make tourism fun, exciting, accessible and affordable to all Mpumalanga people in order to encourage them to travel and explore their own province.

During this month of Tourism, we intend to:

- Encourage more people to embark on leisure activities, and in so doing increase the number of domestic holiday trips and domestic tourism spend in all the provinces, while contributing to a critical sector of our economy;

- Generate awareness on the enormous contribution of the tourism industry to the provincial and national economic growth and job creation;
- Illustrate that the marketing of domestic travel will remain the bedrock of South Africa's tourism industry;
- Promote affordable, accessible packages geared to the new identified domestic tourism segments; and
- Showcase the less visited sections within Mpumalanga.

The *MTPA* as a statutory body responsible for the development and marketing of tourism and preserving the natural environment in the province of Mpumalanga, would like to express to all stakeholders (such as the tourism sector, communities, government, and private sector) that as a destination, Mpumalanga, will take a lead role in creating awareness of the importance of conservation and education, and at the same time expand economic benefits in a more environmentally responsible manner.

JOB CREATION THROUGH TOURISM

As Mpumalanga, we have in the **Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path (*the MEGDP*)** – the economic growth blue-print of the province, identified **Tourism** as one of the key economic sectors with excellent potential for growth. The MTPA was therefore established to assist government to create conditions for responsible tourism growth and development by promoting and developing tourism, thereby increasing job- and entrepreneurial opportunities and encouraging the meaningful participation of previously disadvantaged individuals. Our focus is also on facilitating the growth of the tourism industry.

According to the South African Tourism, there was an increase in the number of tourists' arrivals across all purposes of travels. The tourism sector is continuing to grow – with direct and indirect tourism contribution to the country's 2009 gross domestic product (GDP) growing by 2.7% to R198.4 billion compared to 2008.

This figure represents 7.4% of the GDP. Figures released for 2010 reflect continued growth as well – with tourist arrivals totaling about 7.3 million from January to November 2010. In 2012 tourist arrivals increased by 7.7million.

We have since 2010, supported a total of 80 SMMEs in the tourism industry in the province both financially and non-financially.

Ladies and gentlemen;

Domestic marketing campaigns such as the *“It’s Here’ – VayaMzansi”* campaign promises that “Whatever you are looking for, it’s here, right on your doorstep in South Africa.” As such, you do not need to go outside the borders of South Africa to experience the world. We have the world in one country.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR TOURISM MONTH 2012

Date	Event and purpose	Venue/ Areas to be visited
------	-------------------	----------------------------

05/09/02	Media tour Starting in the morning before the launch with an intention to expose the less visited areas.	Barberton, Hazyview, Nkomazi.
07/09/2012	Tourism Awareness Day Celebrating Tourism month and creating awareness on business opportunities that exist in the sector and how they can benefit the community. This is to encourage locals to travel within the province and appreciate the beauty of their province. Stakeholders such as <i>TEP, SEDA, NYDA and MEGA</i> will be invited to exhibit services they are offering. Eskom will be invited to share with community members on how they can save energy. There will be a stall for Job shop and recruitment on-site during. There will be a number of cultural activities planned this is aimed at appreciating our culture.	Elangeni Guest Lodge, KaMhlushwa
13/09/2012	Wakkerstroom Bird-watching Day Wakkerstroom is one of South Africa's premier birding destinations. Bird watching is an activity that is considered to be less important among certain ethnic groups. This is one of the major tourist attractions in the province and is contributing immensely in the growth of our economy. The intention is to create awareness to communities on domestic tourism and encourage them to appreciate the amenities that surround them. Learners will be invited to a bird-watching session and ensure that they learn more about birds like Blue Crane, Blue Korhaan, Rudd's Lark & Botha's Lark and how they contribute towards tourism.	Wakkerstroom Town Hall
11/09/2012	National Parks Week The National Parks Week is aimed at celebrating and recognizing national parks and Game reserves as a sector in tourism. In support of the National Parks week, local citizens have an opportunity to explore wildlife with free access to most national parks and some game reserves. Most communities are not informed about the importance of appreciating and conserving the environment. The agency will utilise the national parks week to encourage communities to participate in domestic tourism in order to discover the beauty of the country, re-discover the fauna and flora, the historical landmarks and the cultural treasures that make us proudly South Africans. We will take senior citizens from Nkangala region on a tour to the Zithabiseni resort and offer them lunch. Senior citizens in the Ehlanzeni region will be taken to the Kruger National Park. Elderly people who have never been to game parks or game reserves will be afforded an opportunity to visit one and can also have the opportunity to see and learn about the beauty of our environment and this can also be a platform to equip them with knowledge on how to conserve nature.	Zithabiseni and Kruger National park

Date	Event and purpose	Venue/ Areas to be visited
------	-------------------	----------------------------

28-29/09/12	<p>Tourism Safety Road-show</p> <p>The level of crime in Mpumalanga is unfortunately high and cases of crime such as robbery, assault car hijackings, theft and pick-pocketing occur everywhere in the province. Most cases of crime received high profile in the media which in turn discourages tourists from visiting not only the Province but the country as a whole. There is a pressing need to raise safety standard in the entire tourism industry and to improve the country's image as a destination. We also have to develop the tourism experience to reinvigorate the industry with participation from significant stakeholders to create a safe environment. The road-show will focus on issues affecting the safety of tourists and will be conducted in areas that are highly affected by crime targeted at tourists. Areas to be covered during the road-show are Kanyamazane, Kabokweni, Nelspruit, Mkhuhlu, White River, Hazyview and Bushbuckridge. The road-show is aimed at creating awareness on safety issues affecting the tourism industry and create synergy between stakeholders.</p>	<p>Day 1: Nelspruit Plaza, and Kabokweni Plaza</p> <p>Day 2: Mkhuhlu Plaza, Blue Haze Centre and Bushbuckridge Shopping Centre</p>
29/09/2012	<p>4X4 Off Road Experience</p> <p>Mpumalanga has a diverse landscape that creates thrilling and exciting 4X4 trails that can be explored. 4X4 off road drivers can be offered guided tours so they are able to practice their navigational skills, driving skills and test their endurance. Getting close to nature, having fun and challenging adventurers is what 4x4 driving is all about, and Mpumalanga is filled with untamed beauty to discover. There are numerous fantastic 4X4 trails in this beautiful Province such as Riverwild and Lumphisi summit route amongst others.</p>	Riverwild and Lumphisi.