

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR M.N MOKOENA, MPL, DURING THE NAFCOB BUSINESS MEETING AT EMALAHLENI, NKANGALA DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY.

Thursday, 23 February 2012

Programme Director;
NAFCOB President, Mr Lawrence Mavundla;
NAFCOB Deputy President, Mr Steve Skhosana;
Distinguished Guests;
Comrades and compatriots;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning!

POLITICAL INTRODUCTION BY JOHN SIKHOSANA

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Ladies and gentlemen;

When delivering the *State of the Nation Address* on 09 February 2012, President Jacob Zuma emphasised that, and I quote:

“Njengekhabhinethi kazwelonke sithathe isinqumo sokuthi kufanele senze ngokwedlulele, ukukhulisa umnotho wezwe, ukuze siqede lezizinkinga zokwesweleka kwemisebenzi, ubumpofu kanye nokungalingani ezweni. Ilezo zinto ezintathu esizobhekana nazo ngqo, kulonyaka naseminyakeni ezayo.”

(“As a national Cabinet, we have taken the decision that we should do more to grow the country’s economy, in order to get rid of the problems of unemployment, poverty and inequality in the country. Those are the three things that we will face head on, this year and in the coming years.”)

Our major expectation from you, given your rich history of growing and developing entrepreneurs of note, is for *NAFCOC* to continue to play a pivotal role in the economic space of our province, and country at large. As government, we acknowledge the significant role you continue to play in developing and nurturing co-operatives and your focus on promoting Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment. We appreciate that your major quest, is *“to develop and promote economic growth amongst existing and new businesses.”*

We believe that through your *“Vision 2014”* initiative, you will be able to revive township and rural businesses which continue to be the backbone of our economic growth.

Believe you me, co-operatives play a pivotal role in any country’s economic growth and anyone ignoring them does so at his or her own peril.

This is supported by the fact that in countries like Indonesia, there is a government Department dealing specifically with co-operatives.

Your mission of coming up with a Co-operative Bank to assist in proving finance to this significant sector of our economy, is highly commendable. This will provide the much needed assistance to existing and aspiring entrepreneurs, given that the mainstream financial institutions – the banking sector, continue to snub them.

We further note and appreciate your vision “**to have the majority of black retailers buying through NBC (National Buying Company) with a combined buying power of at least one (1) billion rand**” by 2014. We believe that such an attainment would boost the market and economic standing of black entrepreneurs in this country. We must actually congratulate the Indian community, who continue to use this effective method to buy cheaper and bigger.

This is exactly what our country and our province need, if we are to deal effectively with what I've termed the inseparable triplets, that is, **unemployment, poverty and inequality**.

Ladies and gentlemen;

Our proposed New Growth Path for the Province, *the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path (the MEGDP)* is at its finality stages. This strategy proposes specific focus on sectors what have a potential to produce the much needed job opportunities in order to deal with the challenges inflicted by the inseparable triplets. We have the challenge of facilitating the much needed 72 000 jobs by 2020 in order to half unemployment and thus deal with poverty and inequality.

In a nutshell, *the MEGDP* will amongst others, focus on:

- Identifying strategic sectors with a potential to create more jobs in the Province, with a special focus on co-operatives and SMMEs (wherein women, the youth and people with disabilities will be prioritised);
- Prioritising skills development as a pre-requisite for sustainable growth;
- Promoting regional and international economic co-operation;
- Crafting a strategy that will contribute in reducing the carbon footprint or greenhouse gas emissions. This exercise is all about the management of our environmental assets for sustainable development.

In addition, our government continues to implement the *Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (the CRDP)*, through which co-operatives from across of all sectors benefit. So far, seven (7) local municipalities out of the 18, have been designated as beneficiaries of the programme. Our intention through *the CRDP*, is to develop co-operatives of note, which will in turn benefit their communities through job creation and fighting poverty.

We strongly believe that the launch of *NAFCOC's* Business Sectors will continue to assist government, like President Zuma said, in getting rid of the problems of **unemployment, poverty and inequality** in the country.

Our major expectation from *NAFCOC*, is mobilisation around massive job creation. By continuing to support and nurturing co-operatives and SMMEs, you are continuing to partner with us in our quest to deal with unemployment, poverty and inequality.

Let us continue to partner towards closing the widening gap between the so-called first and the second economies.

In a few hours time, the Premier of the Province, comrade David Mabuza will report back to the nation of Mpumalanga on the achievements and progress made since he delivered the *State of the Province Address* last year. He will further outline our government's plans to deal with the inseparable triplets. Much focus will be given on the proposed *MEGDP*, which provides us with a foot-path towards ***"A better life for All."***

Holding hands with *NAFCOC* as an invaluable stakeholder, and ***Working together*** towards a common goal of creating massive job opportunities, ***We can do more*** to halve **unemployment, poverty and inequality**.

POLITICAL CLOSURE BY JOHN SIKHOSANA

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I wish you well in all your future pursuits.

I thank you!