

Our biggest mandate as the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism in the province, is to ensure the growth of our economy for the benefit of our people.

We have developed what we call the *Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path (MEGDP)*, whose main aim is to focus on identifying areas where employment creation is possible on a large scale, in order to mitigate the impact of the recent global economic meltdown. Our challenge over the next ten (10) years, is therefore to reduce unemployment, poverty and inequality, hence our province needs to facilitate the creation of at least 719 000 new jobs by 2020.

This we do in order to reduce the current unemployment rate which is just over 30 percent, to at least 15 percent by 2020. However, for this to become a reality, the provincial economy needs to grow by a rate of between 5 and 7 percent per annum, hence the opening of your store this morning, could not have come at a better time.

Ladies and gentlemen;

On behalf of the Premier, the Executive Council and government, we would like to congratulate *MassMart* on the official opening of the Nelspruit *Makro* store. We appreciate that quite a number of our local people have benefitted through the opening of this store by becoming employed. This store will boost the economy of this district, and the SADEC region at large, given that our neighbours in Swaziland and Mozambique will continue to visit us and leave their money in our province.

Most importantly for us, is the number of jobs that have been created through the opening of this store, which will go a long way to address the challenge of unemployment and poverty. More children will go to bed on a full stomach, following this intervention.

Working together we can do more to decrease unemployment and fight poverty and inequality.

Congratulations on the opening of the new *Makro* store in Nelspruit.

CLOSING REMARKS BY JOHN