

**POLITICAL MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIROMENT AND TOURISM, MR NORMAN MOKOENA, MPL, DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE *TRILAND* BRAND IN MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE.**

**Friday, 30 September 2011**

- Programme Director, Mrs Paula Zandamela;
- Our host, Mozambiquean Minister of Tourism, Honourable Fernando Sumbana, Junior;
- Swaziland Minister of Tourism, Honourable MacFord Sibandze;
- Chairperson of the Board of *INATUR*, Mr. José Augusto Tomo Psico;
- Chairperson of the Board of the Swaziland Tourism Authority, Mr Timothy Zwane;
- CEO of *INATUR*, Mr. Hermenegildo Neves;
- Acting CEO of the *MTPA*, Dr Nthabiseng Motete;
- CEO of the Swaziland Tourism Authority, Eric Maseko;
- Members of the Media;
- Distinguished Guests;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

***Boa Tarde/ San’ bonani/ Good Evening!***

**Political Introduction by John Sikhosana**

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*Senhoras e Senhores* (Ladies and gentlemen);

As Mpumalanga, we believe that the Launch of the Regional Brand this evening, signals our country's and in particular, our province's commitment to contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to sustainable economic growth and development in Africa, in relation to tourism.

I believe that we all agree that the partnership we are celebrating this evening, is a sign of our collective commitment towards contributing to building '**A Better SADEC Region; A Better Africa; and A Better World**' for all who live in it. The people of Africa have pinned their hopes on us, and we dare not fail them.

Through this partnership, we will be able to collectively promote and advance tourism within our region for the benefit of the people of the three countries and beyond. This, we believe, will create the much needed job opportunities for our people in order to improve their living conditions.

On behalf of our Premier, Honourable David Mabuza and the people of Mpumalanga, I take this opportunity to deliver a message of support and to confirm our unwavering commitment towards ensuring that the Brand we are unveiling this evening, lives up to deliver and realise our objectives in relation to growing tourism in our region, by 'selling' our three (3) countries as a single destination of choice.

We are proud that this initiative, undertaken by the three (3) Tourism entities, namely, the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (*MTPA*), the Swaziland Tourism Authority (*STA*), and the National Tourism Institute of Mozambique (*INATUR*), is in response to the *MTPA*'s legislative mandate to promote regional co-operation in tourism. This is recognition that Mpumalanga does not stand alone as a tourism and investment destination, but is rather part of a broader regional network, including the development corridors extending to the south through Swaziland to KwaZulu-Natal; to the north towards the Limpopo Province through to Zimbabwe; to the east towards Mozambique and west to Gauteng.

The co-operation agreement through the Memorandum of Understanding we signed in Swaziland in 2009, have now borne fruit. Our aim was to come up with a strategy to position Mpumalanga, Mozambique and Swaziland as a world-class tourism destination, and generate incremental revenues for tourism in the region. Having interacted with various reports and briefs from the entity that I represent here tonight, I take cognizance of the laborious process undertaken, challenges met with enthusiasm by the working team led by the three CEOs, and various constructive criticism instrumental in shaping the final product to be witnessed here tonight.

Without pre-empting the presentation on the *Regional Tourism Destination Marketing Strategy*, what becomes critical to us as government is recognition of the benefits that will accrue to the three countries which includes amongst others:

- (i) Regional integration towards common goals;
- (ii) Employment creation and economic growth;
- (iii) Sustainable and responsible tourism development;
- (iv) Bio-diversity conservation and protection of natural resources;
- (v) Preservation of culture and heritage; and
- (vi) Joint marketing of the region as a preferred international tourism destination.

Through tourism, we are proud to announce that the economy of Mpumalanga benefitted to the tune of R3.4 billion in 2010 after welcoming a total of 1.7 million international tourists. This has at the same time, created 113, 837 direct and indirect jobs.

We therefore believe that diversification of our tourism product portfolio, collectively as a region, will become a catalyst for tourism growth in the region. We are proud that our region is defined by its rich heritage and culture, sporting supremacy, language, cuisine and the diverse environment.

Our wildlife, nature and beautiful scenery, complemented by the royal tradition and culture in Swaziland; and the pristine and exotic white sandy beaches of Mozambique, will provide a compelling proposition to receive more tourists on an extended stay basis.

Ladies and gentlemen;

Our discussions going forward, will preoccupy the creative minds at the three entities, and further engage on the realities surrounding the effective roll-out of the strategy, obviously with the support of the respective governments. Some of these realities include airlift amongst the three destinations, standard and service excellence, the VISA regime as well as the finalisation of the regional tourism summit concept.

I am reliably informed that deliberations on these issues have already started and we are looking forward to the final recommendations which will be considered further by the Ministerial Task Team comprising of my colleagues, Minister Sibandze of Swaziland and Minister Sumbana of Mozambique.

Before I close, I would also like to indicate that we've received numerous complaints from our people who allege that Mozambiquean police ill-treat non-Mozambiquean visiting this country. They complain that once the police realise that their registration plates are not the local ones, they are pulled off the road and asked to pay something, otherwise they will be locked up. Our worry is that such behaviour, if true, will discourage people from outside your borders to visit your country, and this will have a negative effect to the destination we are launching this evening. It is my plea therefore, that the authorities should look into the matter. We cannot let greed, intolerance and corruption to derail our collective efforts.

**Working together we can do more to promote our region and create the much needed job opportunities.**

Congratulations to the new Regional Brand!

***Obrigado!***