

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR NORMAN MOKOENA, MPL DURING THE TOURISM AWARENESS DAY AT KAMHLUTSHWA, NKOMAZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Friday, 07 September 2012

- **Programme Director, Mr JZM Sambo;**
- **Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Tokozile Xasa;**
- **The Executive Mayor of Nkomazi Local Municipality, Councillor TS Khoza in absentia represented by Cllr M Ngomane;**
- **All Public Representatives in our Midst;**
- **Chairperson of the MTPA Board, Mr Jerri Ngomane and other Board members present;**
- **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 Morning

Theme: “Tourism and Sustainable Energy – Powering Sustainable Development”

Just two (2) days ago, we launched ***Tourism Month*** and provided details of what we plan to do in order to promote domestic tourism, due to the realisation that South Africans do not travel or explore their own country. As government, supported by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (*the UNWTO*), we have selected the month of September to be celebrated as ***Tourism Month*** on an annual basis.

The decision was based on the *UNWTO*'s belief that the ***World Tourism Day*** should be celebrated annually on September 27, given that the day 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.

During this season, we must therefore celebrate and create awareness on the enormous contribution that the tourism industry makes to the provincial and national economic growth and job creation.

The theme for the 2012 Tourism Month is “***Tourism and Sustainable Energy – Powering Sustainable Development,***” as adopted by the UNWTO.

Through this theme, we aim to raise awareness on the significance of switching to green energy in powering the tourism industry. The *UNWTO* argues that travel and tourism is the third largest industry in the world. At 9% of global gross domestic product (GDP), it is larger than automotive manufacturing, which stands at 8%, mining at 8%, and chemicals manufacturing at 7%. The industry is expected to create an additional 21 million direct jobs over the next decade, taking total direct employment to over 120 million, which constitutes more than 3,5% of total employment – excluding the multiplier effect.

According to Tourism South Africa’s *Annual Report 2010*, Mpumalanga was the third most visited province by foreign visitors in 2010 with a share of 14.1 per cent of total foreign arrivals. Mpumalanga however contributed only 6.0 per cent of domestic tourism bed-nights in 2010. The province remained in seventh position nationally. Since 2005, the growth in bed nights spent by domestic tourists in Mpumalanga was faster than the national rate.

The growth in bed nights spent by international tourists in Mpumalanga, however, did not exceed the national rate over the period 2002 to 2010.

As part of the Provincial quest to grow tourism in the SADC Region, I am proud to indicate, Deputy Minister that we've collaborated with our tourism counterparts in Mozambique and Swaziland, and launched the regional tourism destination brand strategy known as the *TRILAND Brand* on September, 30 last year. This strategy or brand culminates from the joint regional destination marketing commitments as defined in terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (for technical co-operation) signed between the three Agencies on the 24th of October 2009 in Swaziland.

The MoU is intended to (i) develop and position Mpumalanga, Swaziland and Mozambique as a world-class regional tourism destination, (ii) contribute to the integration of the region, (iii) contribute to employment creation, (iv) develop sustainable tourism, (v) participate in the conservation and protection of biodiversity, and (vi) preserve cultural values, heritage and national prides.

And for us to claim a stake in regional and international economies, we will focus on improving our relationship with Mozambique and Swaziland in order to enhance regional economic cooperation. To this end, we have committed to develop an implementation plan with bankable projects for this *Tri-land* cooperation agreement.

The MTPA has also concluded and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) to conduct feasibility studies for projects concerning the Blyde River Canyon Cable Car, God's Window Skywalk and Bourke's Luck Hotel and Restaurant.

It is envisaged that this MoU will accelerate private sector investment in the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve in particular, and the tourism sector overall. These infrastructure investment opportunities are pursued within the scope of integrated management plans of relevant reserves in order to fulfil both biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism mandates of the Province.

Our objective for hosting the ***Tourism Awareness Day***, is to make the community understand what tourism is, and what opportunities and careers are available in this industry as defined in our Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path (MEGDP) and the National Tourism Strategy.

So in closing I urge you all to become tourists in our Province, whatever holiday you hanker for – Mpumalanga has it from the high adrenaline and adventure holidays to the quiet camping and animal spotting, golfing holidays, family holidays and as indicated thanks to our Tri-land agreement we even offer the sand and sea...

To elaborate further, I now have the pleasure of introducing the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Tokozile Xasa, who by her vast achievements needs little introduction... A teacher by profession, the first female mayor of a district municipality in the transitional period of local government in the EASTERN CAPE. She has served the ruling party diligently in many different portfolio's at a Provincial level. The Deputy Minister also has many qualifications under her belt such as a BA, majoring in Public Administration and Psychology, a BA Honours, majoring in Public Administration as well as a Masters in Public Administration.

Somehow she has also managed to be blessed with 3 beautiful children in the midst of all her other achievements....

The Deputy Minister will also be representing South Africa on a Mission to China leaving on Monday to strengthen Tourism relations between our two countries, and I would like to take this opportunity to wish her well on her voyage...

Ladies and Gentlemen please put your hands together for the Deputy Minister of Tourism Ms Tokozile Xasa...