

**POLITICAL OVERVIEW BY MEC MR PV MKHATSHWA, MPL, ON THE OCCASION OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON PREMIER'S OFFICE; FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM TO DELIBERATE ON THE 2022-2023 FIRST QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORTS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND ITS PUBLIC ENTITIES HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS PLATFORM**

**Tuesday, 30 August 2022**

Chairperson of the Committee;

Members of the Portfolio Committee;

Acting HOD and the senior management of the Department;

The representative of the Provincial Treasury;

The representative of the Auditor-General's Office;

Other Stakeholders present;

**Good morning!**

1. Chairperson and Members of the Portfolio Committee, thank you very much for inviting us, to come and have a deliberation with this significant Political Committee; and please receive my utmost and sincere gratitude for this opportunity.
2. Undoubtedly, the work of the Portfolio Committee **is crucially important, in making sure that we do not lose focus on our area of work**, and that we consistently account on the work we are doing as the **Department and our Public Entities**, since we kicked-off the sixth Administration.

3. We continue to appreciate and receive your valuable guidance with warm and both hands, in our quest to fulfil the promises we made to our people. Thank you so much for keeping us on track at all times.
4. Chairperson and Members of the Committee; we must acknowledge that this engagement takes place at the tail end of August, which is dubbed the **Women's Month** in our country. Let me, therefore, take advantage of this platform, to convey my revolutionary salutations to the women of our country, who bravely confronted the apartheid system and its backward pass-laws. We are, indeed, standing on the shoulders of these heroines of our struggle for liberation, and we will forever be indebted to them. I take my hat off for them!
5. On the same breadth, we **condemn in the strongest possible terms**, the continuing barbaric attack, raping and killing our women and girl children across the country. We urge our law enforcement agencies, not to leave any stone unturned, and to find these cowards. It is only cowards and people with inferior complexes, who can commit such appalling deeds.
6. Likewise, we subscribe to the notion that **women should also be fully economically empowered and emancipated**; they are equal citizens in this country, and should thus be treated like their men folk. This also relates to the youth and people with disabilities; hence we commit to ensure that this does not just become a lip service, but a reality which will see these marginalised group meaningfully benefitting from the available economic opportunities.

7. Chairperson; I must also indicate that this year, the **Commission for Gender Equality** commemorates 25 years since its promulgation under section 181 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, and the Commission for Gender Equality Act no 39 of 1996, as amended. We must, therefore, reflect deeply on strides made towards attaining gender parity.
8. And as the Department, we will continue to position ourselves, working together with our Public Entities, as the torchbearers for gender equality and women empowerment.
9. This follows the observation by the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), that **there remain gender disparities in youth entrepreneurship**, with young men more likely to be entrepreneurs than young women.
10. In this regard, we **commit to double our collective efforts**, working together with the NYDA and other Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), through our SMME Roadshows, to intervene by assisting a substantial number of young women with business support services in order to undermine these gender disparities. In other words, we will become biased to women-owned businesses, moving forward.
11. Chairperson, there is a disproportionate amount of work undertaken to rebuild our economy, following the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and such strategic intervention was the **Mpumalanga Youth Development Fund (MYDF)**, which is spear-headed by the Premier.

12. This Fund was designed to particularly assist youth-owned businesses to have entrepreneurial activity, consistent with our quest to **implement our Mpumalanga Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (MERRP)**.
  
13. Chairperson, despite the negative impact of the invisible enemy, in the form of COVID-19 pandemic, the latest statistical release of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for Quarter of 2022 by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), shows that **there have been job gains in the labour market** during the said period.
  
14. To this end, Stats SA **posits that the biggest job gains were recorded in Community and Social Services (276 000), Trade (169 000), Finance (128 000) and Construction (104 000)**. However, there were job losses in Manufacturing (73 000) and Transport (54 000). The total number of persons employed was 15,6 million in the second quarter of 2022.
  
15. There is, however, a worrying observation made by Stats SA, that **the youth remain vulnerable in the labour market**. As such, the second quarter of 2022 saw the total number of the unemployed youth, between the ages of 15 and 34, increase by 2% (or 92,000) to 4,8 million from quarter 1 of 2022. This poses an immediate existential task to us, as government, to ensure we create a conducive environment through the roll-out of priorities outlined in our Economy Recovery Plan, so as to create more jobs and encourage entrepreneurial activity amongst the youth.

16. Chairperson, and members of the Committee; in our quest to support the development of industries within the key economic sectors in the Province, we continue to **prioritise the sectors with high potential for inclusive growth**, for the creation of more job opportunities. This includes sectors such as, manufacturing, agro-processing, mining, and the green economy.
  
17. In our continuous engagement with municipalities across the Province, through the **political intergovernmental relations (MunMEC)**, and other consultative forums we have during the period under review, agreed in principle, that there is a need to **accelerate the implementation of Red Tape Reduction Strategy**, which is aimed at reducing the regulatory burden of doing business in the municipalities, especially for the Informal Sector.
  
18. In **strengthening and reviving our tourism industry**, I have just recently, led a delegation from the Province to Eswatini and Mozambique, in our quest to **revive the TRiLand Regional Marketing Brand**. This Brand seeks to promote tourism in our Province jointly with Eswatini and Mozambique. This tourism marketing excursion did not end in Eswatini and Mozambique; we also had to invite them to explore our beautiful Province, through the eyes of the tour operators operating in the two (2) countries.
  
19. This was the re-activation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the MTPA, Eswatini Tourism Agency and Mozambique's INATUR, which was signed in Durban in May earlier this year.

20. With regards to **strengthening leadership structures within the *dedt* family, recruitment processes to fill the vacant posts of Head of Department and two (2) Chief Executive Officers for the MTPA and MER** are in full swing; and we are optimistic that these processes will be concluded soon. It should be noted that this process is not entirely in our control, as we require concurrence of the Executive Council.
21. Chairperson, our Entity, the **Mpumalanga Economic Regulator (MER)**, continues to be a shining example; it has once again achieved a clean audit outcome; we hope and believe they will not drop the ball and will continue to enhance sound management of the Entity with sustainable performance.
22. We must also congratulate **Team MTPA**, for obtaining their first ever clean audit outcome, since the merger of the **Mpumalanga Tourism Authority and Mpumalanga Parks Board**. They have learned from the best, and we hope they will continue on the same wavelength.
23. We further remain optimistic that **MEGA** will turn the tide, as we begin to see improvements in the Entity, since they started with the organisational re-engineering. All is not lost! Even the Department itself, is surely moving towards a clean audit outcome.
24. Chairperson, as the norm, I am accompanied by our Accounting Officers from both the Department and our Public Entities, who will provide further details when they present their respective Performance Reports shortly.

25. And as I retreat, I can confirm that we are, indeed, unwavering in our resolve to ensure that ***the dedt* family improves its performance every quarter, given that our strategic focus is on making sure that we achieve all our set objectives**, as encapsulated in our Annual Performance Plans.

26. Once more, thank you very much for inviting us to engage with the Committee.

27. ***Let's Grow Mpumalanga together!***

Ngiyabonga!