

REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR PV MKHATSHWA, MPL, DURING THE SOCIONEXT YOUTH, HELD AT ERMELO, MSUKALIGWA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Friday, 10th June 2022

Programme Director;

Executive Mayor of Msukaligwa Local Municipality;

Executive Mayor of Gert Sibande District Municipality;

Representative from Gert Sibande TVET College;

Our Social Partners from SAB;

Our Development Finance Institutions and MEGA;

Officials from the Provincial Government and municipalities;

The participants of the Socionext Programme;

Distinguished Guests;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Receive my warmest greetings!

1. Programme Director; it is my utmost honour and privilege to be given an opportunity to address this important SMME's Training workshop, the Socionext Youth Programme, though at its tail end.
 2. It has indeed been an eventful week characterized by a plethora of government programmes, and our undertaking since Monday, has been about discharging our Constitutional mandate of driving economic development in the Province.
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3. And today, before coming to this workshop, I started with the tabling of the Policy and Budget speech of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, outlining our strategic priorities for the 2022/2023 Financial Year.
4. In the budget tabled, the youth development agenda features significantly, and we will ensure that the youth of Mpumalanga derive value and tangible benefits out of the Enterprise Development Initiatives the province will be rolling out in this financial year and beyond.
5. We are, indeed aware of the fact that, most of young people were affected by the shock of Covid-19, and are part of the phalanx of the citizens of Mpumalanga who lost their jobs, as a result of the devastating impact of the Covid-19, and other recently prevailing socio-economic shocks.
6. It is for this very reason, we are mounting plans anchored on our **Mpumalanga Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (MERRP)**, to undermine the impact of these above mentioned shocks into our economy.
7. And I am delighted to be here today to witness yet another milestone in the commitment of this Government to ensure that we work in partnership with the private sector in the spirit of the pursuit of youth development, in line with our Economic Recovery Plan.
8. It is our quest to ensure a proper platform is created for the youth of the province, to build their own businesses in the different sectors of

the economy, business that are resilience in the era of technological disruptions.

9. Your businesses, must fastly adapt to the Ditigital environment, in order to enhance productivity and competitiveness.
10. Programme Director, I wish to also take this opportunity to thank the **South African Breweries (SAB)** for promptly responding to the clarion call, made by our Honourable Premier Mrs Refilwe Mtsweni Tsipane when she called upon the private sector to work with Government to address the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.
11. Today, we are witnessing the fruits of this partnership in recognising the role of the youth in changing their own socio-economic circumstaces by emulating the youth of 1976 who fought for their rights, and ultimately heralded the South African struggle to the democracy.
12. Ours is to create a conducive environment for the youth of this Province, to rise and thrive in the strategic moment of pushing back the triple structural challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, drawing inspiration from the generation of 1976.
13. The success of this programme today is at the core of the implementation of the **District Development Models** which emphasise the need for one plan by all social partners to address the challenges confronting young peoeple.

14. Programme Director; these initiatives will assist us to fight the alarming rate of youth unemployment and unemployability which is reverberating throughout the country.
15. Statistic South Africa indicate that, youth in South Africa continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market with an unemployment rate higher than the national average.
16. And according to the **Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS)** for the first quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate was 63,9% for those aged 15-24 and 42,1% for those aged 25-34 years, while the current official national rate stands at 34,5%.
17. These alarming and worrying statistics, are a motivating factor to us as government, working together with social partners in our shared efforts and responsibilities, to put the youth at the centre of our programmes on our cusp to re-build the economy.
18. And we must commend the support that we have also received from the **Gert Sibande Tvet College**, on their further emphasises that our education system must prepare the youth to start their own businesses instead of looking for employment, given the difficulties of our economy to create jobs.
19. Working together in the intersection of government, academia, and industry is key in our quest to foster social and economic development.

20. Of importance, the SAB in partnership with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, have identified another important programme to support women in business, with a recognition that the rate of unemployment, and the impact of Covid-19, mostly affected women and youth.
21. It is firmly in our plans to ensure that this programme is rolled out to the other two Districts, Ehlanzeni and Nkangala respectively, in order to ensure the programme enjoys some degree of **Provincial footprint**, and its implemented in tandem with our Economic Recovery efforts.
22. And the youth who have participated in this Socionext programme, must serve as our ambassadors in promoting this programme.
23. I wish them well in their endeavours, as they venture into the business arena, and they will receive our continuous support working together with our partner SAB.
24. It is our commitment, that we will draw-in, other institutions of government, the **Development Finance Institutions (DFIs)**, and our Public Entity MEGA, to ensure continued financial and non-financial support in your business operations.
25. Programme Director; I am made aware that, this **Socionext Youth Programme** has selected only **35 participants out of the 257 applications** in aggregate, it is an indictment, and a vividly clear indication that young people are yearning for an opportunity to

unleash their entrepreneurial potential and participate in the mainstream economy, and ultimately create the much-needed jobs.

26. This, must be embraced as an indicator that there is a strong will and burning desire to begin, and succeed; like Ben Okri in '**The Age of Magic**' states: *Will is the basis of discipline, and without discipline nothing of any note is done.*
27. And as the **Province of the rising sun**, we also have the **Mpumalanga Youth Development Fund** through the Office of the Premier, which is available to support the youth-owned businesses in the province, in order to address the persisting structural crises of youth unemployment and poverty.
28. We call upon young people who could not make it, as participants in this socionext programme, to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the MYDF.
29. Notably, while we welcome and embrace this significant working relationship with the SAB, we are cognizant of the fact that, the SAB produces alcohol beverages in its product range, and it is my wish that we join hands with our Public Entity, the Mpumalanga Economic Regulatory (MER), in rolling out campaigns against alcohol abuse and promote responsible adult drinking.

I thank you!

