

SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE MPUMALANGA MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR PRINCE VUSI MKHATSHWA, DURING THE NCOP DEBATE ON SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT HELD VIRTUALLY

Friday, 06 June 2021

Honourable Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces Honourable Masondo;

Chief Whip of the NCOP Honourable Mohai;

Minister of Small Business Development Honourable Khumbudzo Ntshavheni;

Chairperson and members of Portfolio Committee;

Members of Provincial Executive;

Delegates from the Provinces;

Civil Society;

Business Organizations;

Directors General for the Departments of Small Business Development

Head of Departments and CEOs in the SMME's sector;

Ladies and gentlemen!

On the 16th of June this year, we will be commemorating, celebrating and memorialising 45 years of youth confrontational bravery and unwavering resolve to defeat unjust laws of apartheid misrule. We shall continue to draw strength and learn from the unrelentless resilience of the generation of 1976.

The generation of 1976 was a phalanx of young men and women of high moral stamina, determined to fulfil their generational mission and unwittingly, they raised the tempo of the struggle for liberation.

Chairperson, in our quest to fight against the deadly virus of COVID-19, we shall do so with the resolve, tenacity and uncompromising fighting spirit of the generation of 1976.

It is without doubt that the black swan events of the corona virus had a devastating and negative impact on the small businesses. As the consequence of these effects, most of the small businesses became a dead duck in water; they could not survive the omnipresence of the virus.

However, and as Amilcar Cabral posits, ***“When your house is burning, it’s no use beating the tom-toms.”*** It is against this backdrop we ought to forge ahead with the plans to resuscitate the economy of the province amid the presence of the pandemic.

Chairperson, in the context of Mpumalanga, and like in any other part of the globe, the pandemic ravaged the sector and left an indelible impact on the small businesses. It has fundamentally decimated small business operators and simultaneously contributed to unemployment.

However, the provincial government together with its entities, made some significant interventions to cushion small businesses from the destruction of the pandemic through the provision of the SMME relief funds.

In the context of tourism, as the Provincial Government, we have thus intervened and helped businesses who operate in the tourism sector. This is because the sector is the goose that lays the golden egg for the economy of the Province.

The intervention is part of implementing the **Mpumalanga Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (MERRP)**, as pronounced by Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane, during the occasion of the delivery of the State of the Province Address (SOPA) in March this year (2021).

In this regard, we have **allocated ten (10) million Rand** to assist tourism businesses whose operations were affected by the hard lockdown.

Chairperson, we have also reprioritised the implementation of the Township and Rural Entrepreneurship Programme, in order to support businesses operating in the townships and rural economies.

Consistent with the above, we have established partnerships with SEDA, SEFA and NYDA in the Province, to assist SMMEs with business development support and funding and as our deliberate response to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 to SMMEs in the informal sector, and businesses operating in the rural and township setting.

We have also brought-in our entity **Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency (MEGA)** to assist in providing funding to SMMEs and this we do as a direct response to the impact of the pandemic to the entrepreneurs of the province.

The Honourable Premier of Mpumalanga Province, Mrs Refilwe Motsweni-Tsipane in her State of the Province Address pronounced that her office has established **Mpumalanga Youth Development Fund (MDF)** with a tune of 50 million to assist youth-owned businesses.

Finally, chairperson the Province is in the process of developing industrial parks in its three districts, to house SMMEs in order for them to leverage their potential and participate in the economy of the Province.

I am quite optimistic that working together and with conviction, we shall defeat the pandemic and recalibrate the economy and give the mass of our people the necessary jobs, they so need and deserve.

Let's grow the economy of South Africa together by empowering small businesses!

I thank you!