

**Key Note Address by MEC CNM Padayachee at the Gala Dinner for the Miss World  
Contestants held at Crocodile Country Inn, Nelspruit  
30 November 2008**

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Programme Director, Leanne Mannas,  
His worship the Mayor of Mbombela  
The Speaker of our Provincial legislature, Mrs YN Phosa  
Members of the Provincial Executive Council, Cabinet  
Members of the Provincial Legislature,  
Chairperson of the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, Mr Sabelo Mahlalela, and other members of the board  
Chairperson of Miss World Limited, Mrs Julia Morley,  
The reigning Miss World, Ms Zi Lin Zhang from the People's Republic of China,  
The 112 Miss World Contestants from across the globe  
Head of Department, Mr Mandla Mazibuko  
Chief Executive Officer of MTPA, Mr Charles Ndabeni  
CEO of Johannesburg Tourism Company, Ms Lindiwe Mahlangu,  
Tourism Industry stakeholders,  
Ladies and Gentleman.

**Wan Shang Hao! (Chinese)**

**Bonsoir (French)**

**Buenas tardes (Spanish)**

**Good evening**

I am honoured and privileged to welcome you to Mpumalanga Province the land of the rising sun in South Africa.

Today the world has descended on our province Mpumalanga. We are grateful and humbled by your presence. I am sure that as you traveled throughout our country you experienced a country and importantly the people that embrace cultural diversity and unity. You too may have been able to relate to some of them today.

Ladies and gentleman not so long ago we were divided and isolated from the world stage because of a bad government policies then. We really come a long way! from apartheid SA to democratic Republic of South Africa which now shines both nationally and at the international arena.

When we started our journey as a free nation over 14 years ago, we marched forward with hope and confidence because we knew that we will be recognized for all the good things we do, the contribution we make to ensure social cohesion and our input on economic development agenda.

Today ladies and gentlemen we are in the presence of the world's most beautiful women. A beauty that is not only in appearance but one that is deeper, all embracing, that is rooted on warmth and caring spirit, one that can help change the world and help in the fight against poverty, hunger and starvation.

As you travel the world you will be expected to bring messages of hope to thousands and millions of people that their lives will be better tomorrow. You will be expected together with other leaders to get the world to act in unison against inhuman behaviour, end to suffering, diseases and for the creation of a better world where we all can live side by side in peace and harmony, in respect and dignity. You are and will continue to be the voice of the less fortunate. The people of Mpumalanga join you in this crusade. Allow me ladies and gentlemen, to recognize the sterling work reigning Miss World, Ms Zi Lin Zhang, has done for charity.

This event takes place in the middle of the campaign on 16 Day of Activism against Women and Children abuse. It is important that we declare here today, joined by the most beautiful women of the world that we will continue to fight against any form of abuse until this evil is rooted out completely from our communities. No man in his right mind should be given a space to hurt such innocence and beauty.

Tomorrow also marks World AIDS Day. Let's again join hands to fight this scourge by resolving to help in the fight against HIV and AIDS. The world will be a better place when each one of us lends a helping hand to those affected and infected by Aids.

The optimism that has characterised us as a nation continues to be our pillar of strength. South Africa has fully emerged as one of best Nations of the World.

Ladies and gentleman, in the past 13 years to be specific, the confidence of the World on South Africa has grown.

The South African flag remains the 3rd most popular flag in the World as a result of the successful elections in 1994. In 1995, 1996, 2002, 2003 and 2006 South Africa successfully hosted Global events which include the World Rugby Cup, the African Cup of Nations, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the World Parks Congress and the Cricket World Cup.

South Africa will host on behalf of the Continent of Africa one of the world's most prestigious event, as we do with Miss World contest, the FIFA World Cup in 2010.

While our focus has been firmly on things that needs to be done to ensure that we live this dream for the sake of African continent, the presence of so many nations of the world in Mpumalanga cannot be surpassed by anything in this world.

We are very excited that the province will host some of the nations that will be participating in the 2010 soccer spectacle. As we host you in the beautiful and scenic province of Mpumalanga we also confirm that the country is on course to welcome the visitor to the tourism paradise.

Ladies and gentlemen, the contribution that each and every one of you have made as you crisscross the country and finally arrived at the land where life began will be appreciated for many years to come. It will serve as a reminder that 112 countries once descended on Mpumalanga and saw what the province can offer the world. This day the 30 November 2008 will always be remembered as one of the greatest days for Mpumalanga and for me personally. Let me take this opportunity to express, on behalf of our people, our gratitude to the lady who keeps the Miss World contest alive, the Chairperson of Ms World Limited, Julia Morley, thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have begun a process to engage the private sector with a view to ensure that the sector contributes in creating the necessary capacity to handle the demands of hosting big event such as this one.

We continue to do this because we believe that it is unlikely that anyone who has had a majestic experience in our province today would not want to come again. As we prepare for this soccer showpiece, we know that the experience of today will eventually trigger positive responses among the nations that will be participating in that tournament.

The hosting of Miss World by the City of Johannesburg is indeed a major milestone in the consolidation of Global Confidence in the Brand South Africa.

It is also a significant opportunity for Mpumalanga to consolidate its brand awareness and communicate our promise to the world that world class tourism destination beckons in the province with a pioneering spirit and that everyone is welcome to experience scenic beauty and make contact with the origin of human life in Mpumalanga.

Ladies and gentleman, you are all welcome to the real place of birth - the land where the pioneering spirit reverberates throughout and the beating of the African drum signaling the start of another beautiful day in Mpumalanga.

I am sure that all of you today have had a wonderful experience; you have for the first time saw heavenly beauty through God's window. Programme director, someone did declare to me this morning that the places they have been to were like heaven. All 111 contestants have said that this province is a world number 2 destination, first being their country with 1 declaring S. A. being number 1. Now if you do a simple calculation you will realize that we are number 1. I also hope that you have experienced the warmth, caring and welcoming spirit that characterizes our people. If not please tell us. Today you were indeed closest to mother nature, an awesome experience. This is only 1 tenth of what you can experience here, so please come again, privately or otherwise.

Ladies and gentlemen, as a province we pride ourselves about good and excellent service, a service with a smile and a place where the safety of our guest is our number one priority. In the course of the next few weeks, my department and MTPA will look at the possibility of launching a customer service line that will give our people, our guest, a point of contact to report any services that are not in the spirit that we embraces as the province.

Ladies and gentlemen, tourism is one of the critical sectors that make significant contribution to the economy growth of the province. The sector has in many instances shown the potential to grow and continue to give us hope that it can lead our efforts to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment in the province.

Amid the current economic environment we have become known as a country that defies all odds among nations of the world. It is true that the number of tourists visiting South Africa grew by 188% since 1994, from 3 million to 8.4 million in 2006.

The number of inbound tourists rose in the first two quarters of the year that ended in September 2008 despite earlier forecast of decline in tourism demands by the UNWTO in its World Tourism Barometer (SAT Q1 2008). We have indeed become the country that defies all odds in the tourism market.

Ladies and gentlemen even when we make this observation we must indicate that the tourism sector needs such information that will help ensure that the business proposals and initiatives that we undertake are founded on sound knowledge and understanding of the current economic environment.

This is particularly important because the economies of the world are now experiencing huge challenges as a result of the global economic situation that hit the US. The so called sub-prime crisis is possibly the most serious economic shock the world has experienced over the past 20 years. This has meant bankruptcy and threatened foreclosure for a number of high profile and dominant financial institutions in the world economy, notably Bears Stearns and Lehman Brothers. Ladies and gentlemen, the crisis that started on Wall Street will have an effect on South Africa and indeed Mpumalanga because of our global connectiveness.

The effects of this financial challenges mean that we must re-look at everything that we do, satisfy ourselves that given this environment, whatever we are doing or plan to do is informed by careful consideration of the prospects of success of our tourism enterprises.

We believe the 102 Days quick wins campaign that the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency has embarked on will propel us to believe in our selves even more. We are glad that this gala dinner for Miss World contestants, which in many respects signifies the success of this campaign, is held here in the province.

Ladies and gentlemen, the hosting of this Gala Dinner confirms what we have said in our Policy and Budget speech earlier this year that there is a sweeping new wave of performance in the agency which we believe it will take the industry to greater heights. MTPA's partnership and joint marketing agreements with world renowned agencies, like Thompson Holidays, Johannesburg Tourism Company and others will see our industry continue on the upward trend that we are beginning to experience. The second quarter report on tourism arrivals since April 2008 which was released few days ago also confirms some of the assertions we made then.

We now know that more and more of our people from near and far places around the world travel to the province for holidays more than any other activity. We can offer even more.

Let me also thank Ms Lindiwe Mahlangu, the CEO of Johannesburg Tourism Company for allowing this part of the event to come to our province.

Ladies and gentlemen, we pride ourselves about the picturesque scenic beauty of our province which is blessed with some of South Africa's and the world's best tourist draw-cards; our game reserves, forests, hiking trails and beautiful rivers and mountains and fossils that tells a story of the early life on earth but a few. We know we can offer much more than that in terms of tourism offerings. When you come again we will have more to offer you.

Our vision to be 'your world class tourism destination" is supported by the accolades that the local tourism products and owners have received in recently, among these there is:

- Cycad Lodge and Chalets which was entered into the Wall of Fame after coming tops for three years in a row (2005/07) at the AA Travel Guides Awards. This year they won another awards at the Tourism Indaba.
- Singita Game Reserve which has won multiple global awards and recently voted the World Best Hotel just to Mention the few.

We are indeed the land of the endless possibilities because everything started here we are inspired by the pioneering spirit that reverberates in all of the people and tourism products owners in the province

I want you to please carry the message of 3,6 million people of our province as you travel the world over, that our doors are open, food is on the table whilst we await to play host to them for one day one week, one month or even a year or more. Please come and visit us anytime. Also pass this message at home to your fellow citizens. We can't wait to host the world in 2010, we are already ready waiting for you.

Congratulations to all of you for making it to the finals of the Miss World pageant. Best of luck to all of you.

**I thank you**