

**REMARKS BY MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING, HONOURABLE CNM  
PADAYACHEE DURING THE LAUNCH OF CONFERENCE FACILITY**

**CASA DO SOL, HAZYVIEW**

**13 FEBRUARY 2009**

Programme director  
Executive Mayor of Mbombela, Cllr Lassy Chiwayo  
MEC for Agriculture and Land Administration, Mr David Mabuza  
Chairman of Tourvest Holdings & Board of Relais Hotels, Mr Robert Gumede  
Chairperson of various tourism companies  
Distinguished guests  
Ladies and gentlemen

It is a great honour for me to be part of and to address you during this important occasion.

We welcome the launch of “Nhlanguano” conference centre today is a necessary addition to the growing portfolio of tourism facilities and services in the province.

The launch today is also an affirmation of our long held view that the province has and can have the capacity to compete with other provinces and become a priority destination of choice for both international and domestic tourists.

Ladies and gentlemen, the province needs more of initiatives like this especially if we want to successfully compete as the perfect choice for major conferences and meetings in the country.

We must acknowledge the contribution that Mr Gumede and the team is making to ensure that the province expand its tourism infrastructure base. Congratulations for achieving this important milestone.

This conference facility should enhance our determination to compete for major conference or events. It must motivate us to do more to attract major meetings because of increased number of venues that are being established to accommodate large number of people who chose the province for conferencing needs.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the most recent time Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency hosted the Miss World contestants as a way to show that we are ready to welcome the world to our province.

Many of our tourism products and owners received accolades in recent time, an indication that within us lies a determination to make the province a jewel for the tourists.

And as we push for more business and leisure tourists to our province, we know that we are challenging our capacity to accommodate many people that we entice to the province.

It means that the expansion of the conferencing facilities in the provinces would have to be complemented by equal investment in number of beds to accommodate the large numbers of people that we wish to attract to use our facilities.

The core of our mandate is the task to create a platform within which the province can realize sustainable tourism growth.

This broad mandate means that we should make the space favourable for the tourism role-players, individually and collectively, to participate in decision making processes, advise the government on key industry issues and ensure that the environment is conducive to tourism business.

The Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel when tabling the budget on Wednesday said “building our capacity to grow [the economy is and] will be the third thrust of our spending plan.

In line with that announcement the Provincial government will later this evening launch the Mpumalanga Growth Fund. The growth fund represents our firm commitment to support projects that are financially viable and which would have and should make substantial impact on the economy.

Among the projects that we envisage the Fund will focus on is tourism related bulk infrastructure. This is significant because if we invest in projects that support tourism industry the benefits to the economy will be huge.

We believe that if we choose the focus area that have link with existing economic structures of the province we will have greater chances of making significant impact on economic growth.

Ladies and gentlemen, we anticipate that funding of projects that will assist to ensure that roads and services next to or close to the tourists attractions are taken care of will benefit the province and maintain our reputation as the world class destination of choose for tourists.

Despite the current economic situation, we remain confident that the tourism industry would be able to carry the torch where other industries are faltering.

The fact that the country will be the playground for major international soccer matches this year and in 2010 means that there is justification for our confidence in the ability of the industry to help us overcome the effect of the economic meltdown.

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). This simply means that we have indeed become the country that defies all odds in the tourism market.

In conclusion let me take this opportunity to congratulates the visionaries behind the Inhlangano conference centre, you have done a marvelous work!

We are proud to be associated with the launch of the conference facility because you are helping us to become a great nation.

I thank you