

**MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL, DURING THE AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS FORUM AT MERCURE HOTEL IN MBOMBELA, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.**

**Friday, 14 May 2010**

Programme Director;

Your Excellency, the Executive Mayor of Mbombela Local Municipality, Councillor Lassy Chiwayo;

President of the Australian Africa Business Council Chapter in the State of Victoria, Ms Di Fleming;

Analyst of the Australian Africa Business Council, Ms Chantelle Renn;

The representative of the Earth Systems-CDM Energy, Mr David Millin;

Officials from our public entity, MEGA;

Representatives from Local Government present;

Business people;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

**Good Afternoon!**

In 27 days from now, our country will play host to the biggest sporting event in the world, the FIFA World Cup. We are privileged that our Province, Mpumalanga, in particular our Capital City, Nelspruit/Mbombela, will play host to four (4) matches of the soccer spectacular, providing us a magnificent opportunity to showcase our offerings to the countries of the world. We believe that we can offer an abundance of tourism, business and investment opportunities to foreign countries, especially to the Australians, given our investment in infrastructure development.

It is also our honour, that we will host the Australian soccer team and its supporters, when they play Serbia on June, 23 at our new Mbombela Stadium.

Our commitment to you and your fellow country-people, is to give you an unforgettable African experience, which will make you to always look back and want to come back for more. As your people decent on our doorstep in a few days from now, we can assure them that we are ready and waiting with open arms, to welcome them to South Africa's tourism jewel - the province of the firsts, since life in South Africa begins in Mpumalanga, where the sun rises.

We are home to the world renowned Kruger National Park which boasts the big – five; we are home to the third largest canyon in the world and one of South Africa's scenic wonders, the Blyde River Canyon; we are home to South Africa's unique geological features found at Bourke's Luck Potholes; the three *Rondavels* and we also offer a rare opportunity to view the world through God's Window, amongst others.

Our tourism sector, which we believe is our 'gold-mine,' continues to grow enormously and in order to increase the number of tourists to the province, we have - as a province of the firsts, just last week, launched the Airlift Strategy. Our public entity responsible for tourism, the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, has entered into a contract with Comair Limited, which has made flying into our province very affordable. The route will also for the time, offer a business class at affordable rates. We will also just in time for the world cup, launch the **Three-Countries-in-One-Day** Strategy, which will offer visitors an opportunity to have breakfast in Swaziland; lunch in Mozambique and dinner in Mpumalanga including a night drive at the Kruger National Park.

I am therefore humbled and honoured to welcome the delegation of the **Australia Africa Business Council** from the State of Victoria, under the leadership of Ms Fleming, to our beautiful province. We appreciate that you continue to value us as a critical partner on the African soil, given your fact finding mission to our province.

We are pleased and grateful that today's engagement is intended to pave the way for a major investment mission, which you have scheduled for September this year. We can assure you that our legislative and political environment offers a conducive climate to invest in our country, in particular our province, for the benefit of both the people of Mpumalanga and of the City of Victoria.

Ladies and gentlemen, the relations between our two countries can be traced back to the early part of the last century, and continues to grow substantially. Since 1994, these relations have strengthened in every sphere ranging from sport, education, science and economics. During 2009, South Africa's total trade with Australia was valued at R15.8 billion – with exports accounting for R6.6 billion and imports for R9.2 billion.

Major exports from South Africa to Australia include, amongst others:

- Vehicles, aircrafts and parts;
- Base metals and articles thereof;
- Machinery and mechanical appliances;
- Products of chemical industry; and
- Mineral products;

Whereas major imports from Australia to South Africa, include amongst others:

- Products of chemical industry;
- Mineral products;
- Machinery and mechanical appliances;
- Base metals and articles thereof; and
- Animal products - essentially meat.

Our province and the State of Victoria have common economic-driving sectors, namely, mining, energy, tourism and agro-processing. We are home to the richest coal fields in Southern Africa, with the Emalahleni coal fields being the biggest producers in Africa. Mpumalanga is the third largest coal exporter in the world, accounting for 30 per cent of the coal being exported.

Domestically, we account for around 80 percent of coal production in the country and also account for the bulk of electricity generation in the country. We remain the largest production region for forestry and agriculture – the second largest citrus producer in the country, and also accounting for one third of South Africa’s citrus export. Mining activities in the province contributes about 28 per cent to Mpumalanga’s GDP. Our world class road infrastructure, the N4, which connects us with Mozambique has facilitated the smooth transportation of goods and people across the two countries, making investment along the Maputo Development Corridor viable.

May I therefore congratulate our public entity, the Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency, which is tasked to attract foreign direct investment and to promote the province as an investment destination of choice and a regional trade hub, for having facilitated this engagement with the **Australia Africa Business Council** of the State of Victoria. We strongly believe that this fact-finding mission will bear fruit for the people of this province, given that we still require investment in our province in order to deal with our development challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen, the other crucial area of possible investment by your country is on renewal energy. All over the world, countries are experiencing the reality of global warming which is resulting on temperatures and sea water levels rising; diseases and unpredictable weather patterns. This is a challenge that we must collectively address, if you want to be counted as selfless caring countries. We cannot fail future generations – we owe it to them to preserve our world.

We appreciate that your country has started to play its role by investing in renewable energy. We’ve learned about the establishment of what your country call, the ‘**Renewable Energy Future Fund**’ this week, which is aimed at increasing the use of renewal energy by 20 per cent by 2020.

As you prepare to come back later in September, please consider the possibility of bringing along companies which seek invest opportunities in renewal energy in our province. I am quite confident that your fact finding mission will go a long way towards bringing the much needed investment to our province, for the sole benefit of our people. As a Department responsible for economic development, we will through MEGA, continue to seek and attract investment to the province.

As I close, ladies and gentlemen, South Africa is ready to welcome the world during the 2010 FIFA World Cup games. We have disappointed the prophets of doom, who have never believed in our capability as an African country. If we were able to successfully host the 1995 Rugby World Cup, just a year after we democratically took office, what then could be difficult to perform, given our 16 years track record of bettering the lives of our people.

Madam Fleming, may I also take this opportunity to wish the Australian soccer team best of luck in their forthcoming encounter with Serbia on 23 June at the Mbombela Stadium. May the best team win!

**Working together, we can do more** to attract investment in order to grow our economy for the benefit of our people.

In the words of American politician, Tom Bradley, *"the only thing that will stop you from fulfilling your dreams, is yourself!"*

I wish you fruitful interaction with your local counterparts.

*I thank you!*