

SPEECH BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL, DURING THE LAUNCH AND SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE TRADE POINT SOUTH AFRICA MBOMBELA AT CROCODILE COUNTRY INN, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Friday, 13 August 2010

Programme Director, Mr Kaybee Motlhoioa;

The Acting CEO of MEGA, Mr Gijima Dladla;

The CEO of SEDA, Ms Hlonela Lupuwana;

The Provincial Manager of SEDA Mpumalanga, Ms Ntokozo Majola;

Distinguished guests;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Morning!

May I start by expressing my appreciation for having been afforded this opportunity, to address this gathering, which takes place when the country is continuing to recognise the contribution made by our Women, in our struggle for emancipation. The launch and signing of the *Trade Point South Africa Mbombela*, is not a coincidence, but a carefully planned event to coincide with the celebrations taking place this month, to pay homage to the brave Women of 1956, who laid a firm foundation for our freedom.

My believe is that today's launch, is a perfect gift for Women in this province, to proof to them that, like President Jacob Zuma said during the national Women's Day celebration in the Eastern Cape, *"the South African Government recognise that the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment are central to all efforts aimed at combating poverty and stimulating sustainable development."*

We commit to ensure that all Women in our province, should benefit equally like their male counterparts, from the economic activities of the province and country. They have the same socio-economic rights, hence like the President said, their *“emancipation cannot be separated from the fight to eradicate poverty and to improve access to basic services.”* If more Women benefit from such initiatives, so will communities, hence the saying that if you empower a woman, you empower a nation. And as we continue celebrate this Women’s Month, let’s continue to acknowledge their selfless contribution and quest of building a better tomorrow for our children.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Trade Point we are launching today, is the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which was initiated with the intention of creating physical centres that could assist small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) to become involved in international trade. Through this kind of initiatives, we would be able to provide links to various international trade points. We appreciate that these points, would provide information and linkages to businesses to reduce the cost of doing business internationally. Their inception will assist by serving as simplified trade procedures for small businesses, and promote the use of electronic commerce in trade.

Reports indicate that there are currently more than 100 Trade-Point centres assisting small enterprises to trade internationally, in more than 70 countries worldwide. Our province will thus join the provinces of Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, who are already the champions of this programme in our country. We strongly believe that these facilities will go a long way, to ensure that women benefit the most, since they have previously not benefitted adequately in the economic spin-offs of this province.

Through this programme, we would be able to:

- Increase the participation of small enterprises in international trade;

- Support small enterprises to trade more efficiently;
- Assist Trade-Points to become "one-stop shops" where small enterprises can obtain a full set of services with regard to trade information;
- Assist South African companies linkage to the Global Trade Directory Service;
- Facilitate global trade related training;
- Provide mentoring support through the entire trade process; and
- Provide information and support for accessing assistance schemes.

The roll-out of these *Trade-points*, will be led by MEGA, and will be used as launch-pads for Trade-Point Satellite services. We commit to ensure that these virtual Trade-Point services are rolled out at the offices of both MEGA and SEDA across our province, in order to provide the much needed service to SMMEs. I believe this initiative will put a smile on the faces of entrepreneurs, as they will from now on be able to walk into any MEGA or SEDA branch, to access the virtual Trade Point Satellite services.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have the challenge of reducing unemployment and facilitate the creation of decent jobs for our people. Our belief therefore, is that if more people enter the mainstream economy, they will eventually become self-sustainable and this will lead to the reduction of unemployment. Their taking part in economic activities will also contribute towards propelling our once thriving economy.

We need to therefore, work harder through our investment promotion agency, MEGA, to continue to promote and attract foreign trade and investment into the province in order to **speed up growth, create more jobs, decent work and sustainable livelihood** for all our people. Let us start today, here and now and utilise our proximity to Mozambique and Swaziland as a crucial investment destination in the SADEC region.

Our world class infrastructure required to propel the provincial and regional economies need not be overlooked. I believe that Mpumalanga can offer an abundance of investment opportunities to any country in the entire world.

As I close, let us not forget that we need to create awareness to our SMMEs about the benefits of these *Trade Points* and encourage them to use them. We have a mandate to grow and steer the provincial economy, hence such enablers would always be welcomed. We have a responsibility towards SMMEs – since they are vehicles towards economic growth. We congratulate both *MEGA* and *SEDA*, for continuing to live our dream towards **a better life for all**.

Working together we can do more to speed up economic growth and transform the economy **to create decent work and sustainable livelihood** for the people of Mpumalanga.

I thank you!