

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L MAHLANGU, MPL, DURING A DEBATE ON THE JOINT REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION CLUSTER AT THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE IN RIVERSIDE, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Friday, 22 October 2010

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members;

During the recent third National General Council of the ruling party, the African National Congress, members of our movement re-iterated their concern that, and I quote:

“Sixteen years into our democracy, while we have made substantial progress, we have not yet achieved true economic transformation, which should include fundamentally changing the structure of the economy and the distribution of wealth and income in our society.”

And at the end of the NGC, we once more re-affirmed our position that *“the transformation of the South African economy should always be holistic and comprehensive, covering all sectors of the economy.* We agreed that to achieve the shared economic growth and transformation, we must collectively continue to build *“a strong mixed economy, where the state, private capital, co-operative and other forms of social ownership complement each other in an integrated way, in order to deal with inequalities, poverty and unemployment.”*

Our collective and major challenge therefore, both as government and the private sector, is to ensure true transformation of the economy for the benefit of all our people. We have a challenge to migrate those members of our society who live in abject poverty, from the second to the first economy.

Most of these people, who live in what is referred to as poverty pockets, live in rural areas without the means to survive. They have land at their disposal, hence as government, we will continue to intervene through projects such as *Masibuyel'eMasimini*, to ensure that they become self-sustainable in the long run.

We remain a youthful province, with 65% of the total population of 3.6 million people being the youth up to the age of 30 years. We have a responsibility therefore, to ensure that these youth share in the wealth of their country and province, in particular. These youth are the future leaders of this province and our country, hence we will not rest until true economic transformation and beneficiation is realized.

As the provincial government, in our quest to ensure the manifestation of that commitment, and in line with the decision of the ANC's recent NGC, we've already embarked on a process to transform our economy. The process towards a new economic growth path is in full swing. We are continuing to engage all interested stakeholders from all walks of life, both in government and the private sector, to chart a common growth path. It is our intention that once all consultations have been concluded, that we will before the end of the financial year, invite all stakeholders to a retreat, which is intended to produce a proposal to guide us towards true economic transformation and growth.

This we continue to strive for, in order to realise our vision of **creating decent work and sustainable livelihoods**, for the sole benefit of our people.

It remains our concern, that the tourism sector continues to be regarded as the sole reserve of those who regard themselves as supposed custodians of high standards in this sector.

As government, we will leave no stone unturned to ensure that such unacceptable tendencies – making entry for black people in the tourism sector unnecessarily difficult, are removed. We have a responsibility to create the conditions for tourism growth and development by promoting and developing tourism, thereby increasing job and entrepreneurial opportunities and encouraging the meaningful participation of previously disadvantaged individuals. The White Paper on Tourism amongst others, mandates us to ensure **empowerment and capacity-building** in the tourism sector for previously marginalised; and to also ensure **investment on tourism-infrastructure**. This sector is our gold-mine as a province – we need to harness it, if we are to continue to leverage on the legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

We cannot let the majority of our people continue to be barred from entering this sector, hence we will continue to transform the tourism sector. Through institutions like the *MTPA* with the assistance of the recently re-aligned *MEGA*, we will continue to ensure that the previously economically marginalised individuals, are capacitated and receive seed funding to establish businesses which will see them participating in the broader economy of this province.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members;

The hosting of the recent 2010 FIFA World Cup has shown the world that we are a patriotic and united nation. We've shown the prophets of doom that we are capable beyond measure; that we are excellent hosts and that our country and province boast world class infrastructure. It is surprising now that the same prophets of doom, have vanished into thin air with their tails between their legs. They've hibernated because they are ashamed of themselves. We will never be derailed by empty vessels – as they say it – an empty vessel makes the loudest noise. Let us continue to leverage on the successful hosting of the soccer spectacular on the African soil, and make economic transformation a reality.

Honourable Members;

Realising *true economic transformation is about changing the structure of the economy and the distribution of wealth and income in our society*. If all children in Khombaso in Nkomazi can one day go to bed on a full stomach; if unemployed women in Marapyane in Dr James Moroka could one day become self-sustainable; if the unemployed youth in Daggakraal could one day become employers – it is then that we can go to our graves with a smile and pride.

We call upon all the interested partners to join hands with us, as we pave the new growth path, in our quest to continue to better the lives of our people.

Kopano, ke matla!

Working together, we can do more to achieve true economic transformation, by changing the structure of the economy and the distribution of wealth and income in our society.

I thank you!