

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR PAT NGOMANE, MPL, DURING THE OCCASION OF THE PROVINCIAL 2019 *LILIZELA TOURISM AWARDS* HELD AT INGWENYAMA LODGE AND CONFERENCE CENTRE, WHITE RIVER, CITY OF MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Friday, 06 September 2019

Programme Director;

Chairperson of the MTPA Board, Mr Thulani Nzima;

MTPA Board Member, Mr Tlou Keetse, and other Board Members present;

Acting Head of Economic Development and Tourism, Mr Nathaniel Sebitso;

Chief Executive Officer of the MTPA, Mr Johannes Nobunga;

Chief Quality Assurance Officer of SA Tourism, Mr Darryl Erasmus;

Provincial Manager of Old Mutual, Mr Witty Ndlovu, who is also representing Nedbank;

Tourism Product Owners and Tour Operators;

Our prospective Recipients of the *Lilizela Tourism Award*;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Evening! San'bonani!

1. Borrowing the words of Italian-born American former racing driver, Mario Andretti, and I quote: ***“Desire is the key to motivation, but it's the determination and commitment to unrelenting pursuit of your goal – a commitment to excellence – that will enable you to attain the success you seek”***, unquote.
2. Programme Director; we are gathered here this evening, to **acknowledge a commitment to service excellence**. Like Andretti puts it, if you are committed to excellence, you will surely attain the success you seek. If you put your mind to it, surely no one will derail you from achieving you objectives.
3. Tonight, we **celebrate, pay homage, and acknowledge** all those who continue to fly the tourism flag of Mpumalanga very high. We celebrate the *Best of the Best* in the industry, because their **commitment to strive only for excellence, contributes in job creation**.
4. I continue to argue that **tourism is our new gold mine** in the Province – **it is the goose that lays the golden eggs** – and if we nurture it properly, by **always striving for excellence** in all we do, it will indeed continue to create the much-needed jobs for our people.

5. Statistics indicate that the tourism sector **contributes about 9.2% to the total South African workforce**; it is the **6th biggest sector** in the economy; and is the one sector which continues to grow, despite the sluggish economy.
6. The undisputed fact is that **when we tour, we create jobs**; hence this year's Tourism Month is celebrated under the theme: ***"Tourism and Jobs: A Better Future for All"***. This highlights the tourism sector's unique ability to create more and better jobs, thereby building a better future for millions of people around South Africa, and the world.
7. Tourism is, therefore, not only all about travel and leisure, but about how it contributes towards **changing the lives of our people through job creation**.
8. To show the significance of this industry, we will, on the 27th of September, join the rest of South Africa, during the annual celebration of **World Tourism Day**, which will this year be hosted by KwaZulu-Natal, at the **Nelson Mandela Capture Site in Howick**.
9. The celebration is meant to create awareness, on the enormous contribution that the tourism industry makes, to provincial and national economic growth and job creation.

10. Programme Director; besides contributing directly to economic growth, the tourism sector also drives inclusive economic growth, and further **provides the necessary incentive for the government's transformation programmes.**

11. Key amongst our transformation initiatives, is the **Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment**, which is aimed at enhancing the participation of black Africans in the economy, for the attainment of the objectives of the **National Development Plan 2030.**

12. In the main, the NDP strives to eliminate the **triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality** within our communities; hence tourism is a critical economic sector towards job creation.

13. Back to the issue of transformation, as government, we **remain concerned about the slow transformation of the sector.** We believe that this is done deliberately by those who want the status quo to remain. This must seriously change.

14. We thus call for serious commitment from all stakeholders, including the private sector, to walk with us, as we **strive for total economic transformation and job creation.**

15. Ladies and gentlemen; the success and sustainability of the tourism sector also **relies on the treatment we give to our visitors or tourists.**

16. Surely, if **one experiences excellent treatment from the host,** they are highly likely to come back for more, and will even spread the good word to others. Consequently, **good word of mouth will give our Province free positive publicity.**

17. However, if they experience bad treatment, they will surely never come back, and will further spread the bad word about us to others. Likewise, we will receive negative publicity which will work against all our efforts of growing the sector and our economy.

18. My plea to you, therefore, as tourism product owners, is to **always provide an excellent and awesome service to your customers,** which will eventually leave an indelible mark in their minds. You must always remember that **‘the customer is always right!’**

19. **Tourists are your Kings and Queens,** and deserve to be treated as such, at all times. Learn never to argue with your customers, even when you realise that they are actually wrong. Even if you don’t like it, the truth is the survival of your own business depends on your customers – the tourists.

20. Programme Director; tonight is not about long speeches, but an evening of celebration. I believe you're all waiting with bated breath, to know who the winners of the **2019 Provincial Lilizela Tourism Awards** are.
21. It is thus my pleasure to announce that Mpumalanga has recorded a **total of seventy-seven (77) entries, to the 2019 Lilizela Tourism Awards**. Out of this number, **forty-two (42) entrants are our finalists** for tonight.
22. On behalf of the Premier and the people of Mpumalanga, let me, in advance, take this opportunity to congratulate all our winners of the prestigious **Lilizela Tourism Award**.
23. We are proud and value the significant contribution you continue to make towards growing our tourism sector.
24. To all those who will not win, please do not despair. By just being finalists means you are on the right track. This is **not a competition, but pure recognition for excellence**.
25. It means you're just a step away from being a winner, for as long as you will continue to strive for excellence.
26. As I retreat, American actor and writer, Robert Townsend, once said and I quote:

27. ***“If you don’t do it with excellence, don’t do it at all! Because if it’s not excellent, it won’t be profitable”***, unquote.
28. I share those sentiments; hence I strongly believe that **Excellence** should be **your middle name**.
29. In Mpumalanga, ***We Do Tourism!***
30. *Lilizela Mlilizeli!*
31. ***Let’s grow tourism in Mpumalanga together!***
32. I thank you!