

CLOSING REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR PAT NGOMANE, MPL, DURING THE MPUMALANGA TOURISM CONSULTATIVE *INDABA* HELD AT WINKLER HOTEL, WHITE RIVER, CITY OF MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Friday, 30 August 2019

Programme Director, Ms Linda Grimbeek;

MEC for Corporate Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Mandla Msibi;

Executive Mayors present;

Other councillors present;

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

DDG from the Department of Tourism, Ms Morongwa Ramphele;

Chairperson of the MTPA, Mr Thulani Nzima, and other MTPA Board members;

CEO of the MTPA, Mr Johannes Nobunga;

President of KLCBT, Mr Oupa Pilane;

Chairpersons of the Nkangala and the Ehlanzeni Regional Tourism Organisations, Ms Nomsa Mazibuko and Ms Lisa Sheard, respectively;

Our partners in the tourism sector;

Members of the media;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Afternoon/ San'bonani!

1. American author and theorist, G. Edward Griffin, once said, and I quote: ***“Whenever a partnership is formed, there has to be a benefit to the partners; otherwise, they won’t form it”***, unquote.
2. Indeed, the reason why we were gathered here over the past two (2) days, was **because we believe that we will all benefit from the partnership** we are forging. If we were not going to benefit, surely we were not going to bother ourselves.
3. For government, such benefit will accrue to our people, given that **when the tourism sector grows, they will get jobs; their socio-economic positions will improve**; and ultimately poverty and unemployment will be reduced.
4. As for the private sector, their businesses will thrive, and they will ultimately smile all the way to the bank. Eventually, every stakeholder will be happy.
5. I therefore believe that, this **Tourism Consultative Indaba**, has brought us closer, as government and the private sector, to look at ways of addressing issues hindering tourism growth in our Province.

6. As the Provincial Government, we can assure you that we are prioritising tourism, as it is a sector with the potential to create the much-needed jobs. We will, therefore, harness it because one of the priorities of the sixth (6th) Administration, is ***Economic Transformation and Job Creation***.
7. Earlier this morning, I chaired a meeting of the **Provincial BBBEE Advisory Council**, and one of the issues I sharply raised was transformation. The Advisory Council has the responsibility to ensure that there is **economic transformation which is biased towards the previously and historically disadvantaged individuals**, the majority of whom are black people.
8. In essence, the Advisory Council must also **advise us on how we transform the tourism sector**, so that, the majority of our people can enter and also benefit from the tourism sector.
9. This, however, does not exonerate you, as you are a critical stakeholder in the sector. In fact, I'm happy that the President of KLCBT, Mr Oupa Pilane, is also a member of that Provincial BBBEE Advisory Council, and will thus **put his money where his mouth is**. I expect him and his organisation, to play a meaningful role **towards realising this elusive transformation of the tourism sector**.

10. Let us, thus, commit to work together to realise **tourism transformation** in our Province, for all to benefit.
11. As government, we are also prioritising **rural and township tourism**, as it is a niche market in our Province. This is because tourism attractions in our townships and rural areas offer a unique experience, which is not found in urban areas.
12. We thus commit to **unearth all the tourism opportunities that can be exploited in our townships and rural areas**, in order to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people of Mpumalanga.
13. Our Department has just recently, appointed a service provider, to develop the **Township and Rural Tourism Development Plan**. We will work with you, as the private sector, through the Tourism Forum, to develop this Plan.
14. This is part of our broader intervention in the **township and rural economy development**, which the Premier spoke about during the ***State of the Province Address*** in July.
15. We further acknowledge that the **condition of the roads leading to our tourism attractions is not pleasing**.

16. We commit to do something to improve the situation. You heard the detailed plans of our sister **Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport** in this regard; you heard about **SANRAL's** plans, as a strategic economic infrastructure developer, to build new and even improve certain roads in the Province; and trust that all these will alleviate the problem.
17. We also remain concerned about the **alleged roadside corruption by our traffic enforcement officers**. We all agree that this bad practice should be uprooted, and we thus urge you as our partners, to report such unbecoming behaviour.
18. We also remain concerned about the **high level of crime directed towards tourists**, from within our communities. This, indeed, sends a wrong message that visitors are not welcomed in our Province. Common sense assumes that anyone who is not well received, will think twice before going back to the place where they felt unwelcomed.

RESOLUTIONS:

Programme Director;

19. As parties to this **Inaugural Tourism Consultative Indaba**, we hereby agree to collectively do the following:

19.1 ***Relationship/Institutional Arrangement***

- ⇒ **Develop the Mpumalanga Tourism Act** – which will include local government. The role should clarify roles of all key stakeholders, including local municipalities;
- ⇒ **Finalise and implement the Mpumalanga Tourism Development Strategy (MTDS);**
- ⇒ **Adopt the Mpumalanga Tourism Development and Stakeholder Blueprint**, which would be geared towards ensuring collective and inclusive tourism policy development, amongst others;
- ⇒ **Implement Structures of Engagement** immediately after this Indaba. These structures will include LTOs and RTOs in all municipalities. I must further stress that **all LTOs and RTOs will be treated the same**. We will **not allow any big-brother approach** from those who might have an impression, that they are bigger than others;
- ⇒ **Launch the LED Forum**, which must hold meetings on a quarterly basis;
- ⇒ **Establish the Local Government Tourism Forum;**
- ⇒ **Hold the Local Government Tourism Indaba;**

- ⇒ Make this **Provincial Consultative Indaba, annual engagement meeting.**

19.2 Road infrastructure

- ⇒ Fast track maintenance/upgrade on key tourism routes;
- ⇒ Take pre-emptive actions, such as more regular inspections of roads to identify problems, so that quicker short term action can be taken;
- ⇒ Find budget outside of regular provincial budget;
- ⇒ Access special Treasury funding such as the Tourism Infrastructure Fund;
- ⇒ Better collaborate with SANRAL, municipalities and mining/trucking companies;
- ⇒ In some cases, turn bad tar roads into good gravel roads;
- ⇒ Establish Driver Behaviour Forum /Service Delivery Forum.

19.3 Roadside corruption and safety of tourists

- ⇒ Put up roadside warning boards indicating a dedicated 24/7 number which tourists can call;
- ⇒ Establish a Central Reporting Centre;
- ⇒ Ensure that there is visible policing by traffic police and private security at all times;
- ⇒ Use technology to hold special courts;

19.4 Tourism Development, Transformation & Land Reform

- ⇒ Focus on the Corridor Development by focusing on strategic tourism routes;
- ⇒ Encourage big establishments to include packages for SMMEs ;
- ⇒ Develop creative industries (like Dr Esther Mahlangu's place);
- ⇒ Re-introduce fly-fishing;
- ⇒ Ensure that concessions include BBEE initiatives.
- ⇒ Come up with Stokvel packages;
- ⇒ Expand airlift;
- ⇒ Arrange the Local Government Tourism Indaba;

Ladies and gentlemen;

20. All these Resolutions, will form the basis of the collective agreement, we intent to sign with you, the private sector, on the 21st of September during the **Provincial Tourism Awareness Day** in Barberton.

21. *Let's grow the tourism sector of Mpumalanga together.*

22. ***Ngiyabonga!***