

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR SIKHUMBUZO ERIC KHOLWANE, MPL, DURING THE TOURISM BUDDIES GRADUATION CEREMONY AT CHURCH ON THE HILL AT KAMAGUGU, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Friday, 11 December 2015

- Programme Director, Mr Jonga Kuhlane;
- Executive Mayor of Mbombela - the Host Local Municipality, Councillor Sibusiso Mathonsi;
- Chairperson of the Interim Board of the MTPA, *Babe* Siphon William Lubisi;
- Acting Head of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, *Babe* Jacob Mgidi;
- Representative of the Host Employer;
- Members of the media;
- Distinguished guests;
- Ladies and gentlemen;

San'bonani/ Good Morning

Programme Director;

1. It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today to celebrate the achievement of participants in the Tourism Buddies learnership programme.
2. Programme Director, we are a nation in transition towards an inclusive society.
3. We are still walking in the footsteps of the great warriors and many selfless heroes and heroines who defined our entitlement as the people of South Africa more than 60 years ago.
4. As we round off the **Year of the Freedom Charter**, it is important to remind those who still have doubts that the ANC Government remains focused on ensuring the set of citizen's entitlements are realised that ***Siyaya Phambili***.
5. Not only is the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa representative of the wishes of the 1960's generation, but the National Development Plan too, underscores the important steps that must be undertaken to ensure that these fundamental rights are achieved by 2030.

6. Today we are responding to the instruction of the ANC to **increase graduation of further education and training colleges to 75% by 2030**, as also stipulated in the National Development Plan.

Programme Director

7. Over the past 20 years, tourism has experienced continued growth and has undergone such diversification in our Province, that is has become one of the fastest growing economic sectors.
8. The **Tourism Sector** is now regarded as South Africa's **engine of economic growth**, and is also one of the largest and fastest growing sectors worldwide.
9. Its potential to create the much needed job opportunities has resulted in the Heads of State of G20 countries recognising it as **a driver of growth and development** globally.

10. Tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce, and represents one of the **main income sources for many families** in our country.
11. The **business volume of tourism is said to equal or even surpass that of oil exports, food products or automobiles.**
12. The sector contributed **9.4% or R357 billion** to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of South Africa's economy in 2014, which is expected to rise by **3.4% this year, and to 10.4% by 2025.**
13. Its **share of the country's employment figure was 9.9%** in 2014 – meaning that it employs **1 million 497 thousand and 500** people.
14. This figure is expected to rise to **2 million and 28 thousand by 2025**, and will thus account for 11.5% of the total employment figure.
15. What it means is that **one (1) in twelve (12) people in a job**, is employed in the tourism sector.

Programme Director;

16. I am sharing these figures to **emphasize the importance of the Tourism Sector** in employment creation and economic growth in our Province.
17. We must therefore **continue to exploit its job creation capability** in order to address the **triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality** which are currently plaguing our nation.
18. To this end, I want to appeal to the sector and all stakeholders in tourism to commit to delivering **excellent customer experience and service** to our guests in the Province.
19. We must commit to provide **‘never-to-be-forgotten’ customer experience**, in terms of our tourism product offerings, and **excellent customer care**.

20. These two (2) attributes can **either make us, or break us**, as they are the foundation of a thriving tourism and hospitality sector.

Skills development in the sector

21. One of the fundamental injunctions of the Mpumalanga **Economic Growth and Development Path (MEGDP)** is to **address skills shortages** in all sectors of the economy, including, the tourism sector.
22. To this end, the government will continue to **safeguard the long-term prosperity of the tourism industry through sustainable development**, by giving special attention to training and human resources in specifically tourism-orientated skills.
23. The Provincial Government will continue to do this because we have the responsibility to nurture and develop **a pool of committed tourism cadres**, who understand that ***‘the customer is always right!’*** in this sensitive sector.

24. I am therefore delighted to witness and officiate at this, the Graduation Ceremony for the **Tourism Buddies Learnership Programme**.

Ladies and gentlemen;

25. This Programme that has been implemented for several years, and is aimed at **transferring skills to young South Africans under the age of 35, with or without a Grade 12 certificate**.

26. A total of **450 learners** from all the three (3) District Municipalities in the Province participated in this **12 month long Tourism Buddies Learnership Programme** during the 2014/2015 financial year.

27. We are proud of these learners who will today be awarded qualifications in the following areas:

- **National Certificate in Food and Beverages (NQF level 4)**

- **National Certificate in Accommodation Services (NQF Level 2)**
 - **Table Attendant Skills Programme on Food and Beverages**
28. As we recognise the Tourism Buddies of 2014, we will also acknowledge the Host Employers who participated in this Programme by giving them **Certificates of Acknowledgement**.
29. The contribution of the Host Employers was critical in the success of this programme because the structure of the training was composed of **30% theory and 70% practical training**, during which learners were placed at various hospitality establishments within the Province.

Programme Director

30. I would like to extend our appreciation to the **National Department of Tourism** for having introduced and partnering with us in this wonderful initiative.

31. I would also like to convey my and the Honourable Premier, Mr DD Mabuza's appreciation to the Host Employers who heeded our call by employing some of the students, either on a permanent or temporary basis.
32. I would also like to congratulate all the successful learners and wish them well in their chosen societal tasks to become Ambassadors of the Tourism sector.
33. As we address this successful Class, I am reminded of **Ernesto 'Che' Guevara** – the Argentine Marxist revolutionary, who was at the forefront of Cuba's revolution, who once said and I quote:

“We must strive every day so that this love of living humanity will be transformed into actual deeds, into acts that serve as examples, as a moving force” [Unquote].

34. As your graduate today, strive to be a good example – ‘a moving force’ to be reckoned with.

35. I am so immensely proud of you, for persevering to attain your goals of completing the programme within the applicable timeframe.

36. **Congratulations!**

As I close;

37. The **festive season** is upon us, and I know that you are being **flooded with marketing gimmicks**. Be responsible with our hard-earned money.

38. **Never be swayed or lured** into purchasing what you do not need. Refrain from impulsive buying.

39. You have serious pressing issues in January, like **school fees and other related necessities**.

40. Your children's future is far more important than indulging in unnecessary things during the festive season.

41. Our advice to you during this festive season is:



- **Always draw up a budget before spending;**
 - **Buy only what you need and not what you want;**
 - **When entering into a contract, read it carefully before signing it;**
 - **Insist on getting a copy of the contract once you have signed it;**
 - **Avoid buying goods on credit.**
- 42. May I also take this opportunity to wish you, and your families, a Merry Christmas and A Prosperous New Year.**
- 43. Let us come back in 2016 with more vigour, zest and zeal as we strive to *Move Mpumalanga forward!***
- 44. Ngiyabonga/ I thank you!**