

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR SIKHUMBUZO ERIC KHOLWANE, MPL, DURING THE GREEN ECONOMY ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS HELD AT THE NKANGALA DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY OFFICES IN MIDDELBURG, STEVE TSHWETE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

**Thursday, 25 August 2016**

- Programme Director and the Head of Economic Development and Tourism, Mr Muzi Mkhize;
- Executive Mayor of the Nkangala District Municipality, Councillor Linah Malatjie;
- Executive Mayor of the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, Councillor Mike Masina;
- MMCs for Local Economic Development;
- Other councillors present;
- All our Experts in Green Economy;
- Representatives of our Development Finance Institutions;
- Prospective Investors and Business People;
- Members of the media;
- Distinguished guests;
- Ladies and gentlemen;

**Good Morning**

Programme Director;

1. This month marked the **60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Heroic Women's Historic March** to the doorstep of our erstwhile oppressors.
2. Like soldiers committed to do duty for their country, they risked their lives and faced the oppressor's barrel of the gun to register their disdain against the barbaric pass laws, including challenging the idea that **'a woman's place is in the kitchen'**, and subsequently declared it to be everywhere.
3. Today we are all free, including the oppressors who were not aware that they had shackled even themselves.
4. We must therefore never forget to acknowledge and cherish the contribution made by women of yester-years, and continue to recognise those of today for continuing to be pillars in and outside our homes.
5. As the saying goes, **behind every successful man, there is a wise and caring woman.**
6. ***Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo'*** (You Strike a Woman, You Strike a Rock)!
7. We salute you women of South Africa!

Programme Director;

8. It was therefore not a mere coincidence that this year's **local government elections** took place during this all significant month of August.
9. Our intention was to symbolise the significant role played by women in realising the **right to vote for the government of our choice – the people's caring government led by the African National Congress**, as we did on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August.
10. Accordingly, the elections have come and gone, and what is left for us, is to accelerate the pace we have been delivering services to our people.
11. When we traversed the length and breadth of our Province during the run up to the elections, our people directed us to put more oomph and change the way we do things in order to **render services to them better, efficiently and faster**.
12. As the caring ANC-led government, we have listened to their pleas, hence all hands must be on the deck in order to decisively deal with the **triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality**.
13. This propels us to do things extra-ordinarily, working in collaboration with our municipalities, traditional leadership and the private sector.

Ladies and gentlemen;

14. Human activity aimed at socio-economic growth and development, invariably leads to some form off greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere.
15. The **greenhouse carbon emissions cause global warming/climate change**, which has propelled us to come up with development strategies that are biased towards protecting our environment.
16. This is because if unmitigated, this unfortunate worldwide phenomenon **would result in dire consequences which would threaten our food security, and even our very existence**.
17. Notwithstanding our development challenges as a developing country, we are all aware that the rising temperatures, which amount to global to climate change, are as a result excessive greenhouse gas emissions due to industrialisation.
18. We thus acknowledge that there is an **urgent need to combat climate change and to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations** in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous interference with the climate and eco-system.
19. To this end, we are a **signatory to the 2011 Climate Change Declaration** which commits us to promote low carbon economic growth as part of the green economy.



20. Despite the dire consequences, the **advent of climate change and global warming** has however presented us with an opportunity to exploit the **emerging Green Economy Sector**, whilst on the other side we strive to correct the mistakes of the past.
21. In this regard, we have adopted the Provincial Economic Growth Blueprint – the **Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path (MEGDP)** through which we committed to prioritise economic sectors, like the **Green Economy**.
22. This was crafted in line with **Vision 2030** which recognises the contribution that the green industries can play towards employment and economic growth.
23. This emerging sector and others identified for prioritisation, have the **potential to create the much needed jobs**, in order to address the triple challenges facing our Administration.
24. Our engagement in this venue, over the next two (2) days, should help us formulate ways and means through which our Province **can contribute and benefit meaningfully in the Green Economy**, noting our natural resource profile.
25. Through this Roundtable Discussion, we amongst others would like:
  - **To position Mpumalanga as the main point of focus for green economy activities in South Africa;**
  - **To gather inputs on potential provincial priority actions for the green economy (Green Economy Sector Development Plan);**
  - **To confirm the key elements of a green economy path (15 years horizon) in Mpumalanga's context; and**
  - **To start building provincial consensus on the green economy path as an innovative way towards sustainable consumption and production patterns.**
26. This Roundtable Discussion is thus critical as it came at a time when our Department is in a **process of concluding a Green Economy Plan** for the Province.
27. Our participation in a number of Green Economy summits and events around the country and elsewhere, has indeed confirmed that **the future of this sector is very bright**, hence we require its brightness to brighten our economy for the benefit of our people.
28. We want to see **Small Businesses and Co-operatives** making significant strides and benefiting from this sector.
29. We also would like to see **women-owned and youth businesses** emerging and benefiting from this sector.



30. As we are gathered here, we need to be mindful of the fact that South Africa, and consequently Mpumalanga, are currently confronted by electricity supply constraints, high levels of energy poverty, and various constraints with respect to enablers of a Green Economy.
31. Furthermore, as a Province, we are **amongst the most carbon intensive economies in the world due to the mining and use of coal** for electricity generation and petro-chemical production.
32. Like I alluded to earlier, **economic activities such as manufacturing and transport place the environment under severe pressure**; hence we have the responsibility to mitigate the effects of global warming and climate change through strategic sectors like the Green Economy.
33. To this end, natural resource scarcity in the form of water shortages, declining arable land and a decline in the expected value of reserves of commodities such as gold and coal due to declining quality, quantity, ease of extraction and a move towards firm international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, thus **pose a threat to the stability and sustainability of the economy**.
34. Accordingly, it is therefore crucial that as a country we prepare to **produce more clean energy and improve the efficiency** with which financial, natural and social capital are utilised.
35. Thus to address these challenges, we all need to **put our heads together in a co-ordinated effort to decouple economic activity from environmental degradation and carbon-intensive energy consumption**.
36. This is the basis for a 'green economy', and offers us an opportunity for an integrated approach towards achieving economic growth, poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and resource efficiency.
37. As you are all aware, the majority of this sector's emissions are generated in the Province's Highveld region – the host District of this all significant engagement-by coal fired power generation and petro-chemicals production.

Programme Director; Ladies and Gentlemen;

38. It is therefore crucial for all of us in the Province to **take significant steps in promoting low carbon development and enabling greener economic growth**.
39. However doing so requires careful planning and a high degree of co-ordination between all stakeholders.
40. The Provincial Government and its partners consisting of yourselves, therefore have an important role to play in creating conditions that are **conducive to the development of a greener economy**, identifying opportunities, encouraging private participation in the green economy, and investing directly in new technologies, processes and activities.



41. As I conclude, it is thus important to reiterate that the green economy places a challenge on the government, the private sector and the community at large to **assess the prevailing models of economic growth and make the necessary changes for a sustainable future.**
42. Consequently, there is clear recognition, both at a global and national level, that a **new economic paradigm of inclusive and sustainable development** that responds to global environmental and economic challenges, is vital in order to realise sustainable economic growth.
43. As Government, we have been charged with leading the discourse on the Green Economy and setting a policy direction that will ensure that countries and regions transit towards economic growth that result in **resource efficiency, reduction in poverty and inequality, and environmental protection.**
44. This is in line with the **Bill of Rights** in our country's progressive Constitution which guarantees that everyone has a right to enjoy **"an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being"**.
45. As part of an integrated policy framework, the Mpumalanga Provincial Government is taking steps in **seizing the attractive opportunities that the green economy presents.**
46. These prospects include the **deployment of clean or energy, energy efficiency and "green energy" generation and utilisation.**
47. This Roundtable Discussion **thus presents the first steps in the process of co-ordinating and collaborating for greener economic growth.**
48. It is important to note that change is not a destination but an ongoing process.
49. As government, we would like to encourage open dialogue that contributes towards shaping the green economy agenda for our Province.
50. On behalf of the Premier, Honourable DD Mabuza, and our Provincial Government, I would like to officially open this all significant Green Economy Roundtable.
51. I wish you successful engagements as we deliberate on the measures for growing the Green Economy sector in the Province.
52. ***Together We Move Mpumalanga forward towards a green economy!***

**I thank you!**