

STATEMENT BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR SIKHUMBUZO KHOLWANE, MPL, DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE MPUMALANGA YOUTH BUSINESS PORTAL AT THE MBOMBELA STADIUM AT MATSAFENI, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Tuesday, 24 November 2015

- Programme Director Mr Sakhele Ngwamba;
- The Executive Mayor of the Host Municipality, Councillor Sibusiso Mathonsi;
- Honourable Speaker of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature; Mrs Thandi Shongwe;
- Honourable Members of the Mpumalanga Executive Council present;
- Honourable Members of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature present;
- The Provincial Secretary of the ANC, Comrade Lucky Ndinisa, and other ANC officials present;
- Other Executive Mayors present;
- All Councillors present here this evening;
- Acting Director General of Mpumalanga, Mr Thulani Mdakane;

- Acting Head of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Mr Jacob Mgidi and other HODs present;
- The President of the Youth Chamber of Commerce and Industries in Mpumalanga, Mr Tumelo Moele;
- Chairpersons and CEOs of our Public Entities; Members of the media;
- Distinguished guests;
- Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Evening/ San'bonani

Programme Director

1. Thank you very much for gracing this important occasion of the launch of the Mpumalanga Youth Business Portal.
2. This event takes place shortly after the launch of the **Mpumalanga Youth Employment Programme**, which will be used to create opportunities for the Youth of the Province who have ideas to start their own enterprises.

3. Today, we continue on the same journey of advancing the youth development project, as aptly decoded in the National Development Plan, the Youth Accord and many other progressive policies of the Ruling African National Congress, all which seek to take South Africa and Mpumalanga Forward.
4. We stand firm on the side of the young people of this country that the Youth's 40 percent set aside on business opportunities must be realised in our time.

Programme Director

5. The **National Development Plan (NDP)** has set a target of **creating an inclusive society** by 2030.
6. The vision of inclusive society expresses our appreciation of the preamble of the Freedom Charter which state that ***“South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people”***

7. The envisaged inclusive society can therefore not happen without full participation of the majority of the people, and mostly the unemployed youth, in the economy of the Country and our Province in particular.
8. It is for these same reason that the Honourable Premier D.D Mabuza, when delivering the **State of the Province Address** in February this year, emphasised that, and I quote:

“Young people must be at the forefront of exploiting the opportunities presented by both government and business” [Unquote]

9. The Honourable Premier understood that for the government to establish an inclusive society, which conform to the principles of the Freedom Charter, the Government must create platforms for and support initiatives that will make information freely available to the Youth to access business and career opportunities.

10. We are therefore delighted to launch one such initiative or enabling platform – the **#MpumalangaYouthBizPortal**, which was committed by the Honourable Premier on behalf of the Youth of this Province.
11. The Portal is one of our response to the **Youth Employment Accord** which was signed by youth formations of South Africa, government, organised business, organised labour and community formations on the **18th of April 2013**.
12. The Accord sets out a joint commitment to prioritise youth employment and skills.
13. It is therefore an expression of our belief that, for South Africa and Mpumalanga to reach its full potential, the youth need to be brought in to participate meaningfully within the mainstream economy.

Programme Director

14. We are hopeful therefore, that the Portal will address all information challenges which were previously hindering Youth development in our Province.

15. The ruling party, the African National Congress, is alive to the reality that the slowing of small business activity could lead to economic stagnation, and thus it will continue to strive for an integrated and growing economy from which all South African's can benefit.
16. While the unemployment rate in the Province has improved only slightly from 27.2 per cent in the second quarter of 2015 to 26.2 per cent in the third quarter of 2015, we remain concerned that 71.2 per cent of the unemployed people in the Province are young people below the age of 35 years.
17. These are the future leaders of our nation, and the future of our economy depends on how the youth enterprises are prepared and integrated into our mainstream economy in order for them to become competitive on the global platform.
18. Government in partnership with the private sector needs to do more to support the fundamentals of entrepreneurship by **easing access to finance, business skills and improved logistical assistance.**

19. On the onset, we must link graduates from Institutions of Higher Learning to relevant work opportunities.
20. It is for the same reason that we are taking a position that a mandatory requirement for experience for the entry level vacancies must be revisited.

Programme Director;

21. We have realised the crucial need to assist youth enterprises to access business opportunities from not only government and its agencies, but also from the private sector at large.
22. Government is embarking on a number of infrastructure development initiatives within the Province.
23. The opportunity for Mpumalanga based youth owned enterprises to participate meaningfully and gainfully in these initiatives cannot be let to go past.
24. It therefore becomes important that all government institutions and businesses list their development initiatives on the portal in order for our young entrepreneurs to access them.

25. The **Youth Business Portal** is therefore an invaluable tool that will act as a platform for youth enterprises to access information on economic development and business opportunities in the Province.
26. Through this portal, Youth owned enterprises will have the opportunity to profile themselves extensively, to a large market of government and business within the various sectors of our economy.
27. It will also be a platform for the youth owned enterprises to connect with potential business partners, investors and mentors.
28. The government is currently implementing various initiatives to modernise the supply chain management environment throughout the public sector.
29. Working together with the National Treasury, we have started the process to roll out the Central Supplier Database and eTender systems as part of improving business processes in the Provincial Government.

30. The **Mpumalanga Youth Business Portal** is therefore an important addition to these great initiatives that seek to reduce the cost of doing business and to ease access to information on business opportunities.

31. I would therefore like to appeal to all youth-led enterprises to register on www.csd.gov.za as it links with the opportunities that will be made available through the Youth Business Portal.

Programme director

32. The Department of Economic Development and Tourism entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Youth Chamber of Commerce and Industry of South Africa in May this year.

33. It is encouraging that this relationship is already beginning to *bear good fruits*.

34. The young men and women of the Youth Chamber have shown initiative and brought in fresh ideas to the project.

35. Their dedication and commitment in assisting to drive the project has been commendable, to say the least.
36. The **Youth Business Portal** we are about to unveil, was not designed and crafted by some high flying long established large corporation.
37. It is the product of the minds of our very own youth, working with a youth owned enterprise from the rural areas of our Province in Nkomazi.
38. This bears testimony to our belief in our own youth in this glorious Province – **Mpumalanga – *the Place of the Rising Sun.***
39. We welcome and value this working relationship, and see this as the first step in accelerating the pace of **moving Mpumalanga** and generally, **South Africa, forward** by increasing participation of the youth in our economy.
40. We have no doubt that once barriers to accessing information are lowered, the fiery entrepreneurial spirit of our youth will be galvanised into action, and they will pursue these opportunities with relentless effort.

41. Programme Director; ladies and gentlemen, you can see that we are not advocating a-spoon-feeding-approach, but rather an approach that gives **fair access to information in a cost effective manner.**
42. Like one Chinese Philosopher, Lao Tzu said, and I quote ***“A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step”*** [Unquote], we must take a first steps toward inclusive society, by involving young people in the economic development of their country.
43. Perhaps the most relevant advice, given the level of entrepreneurship in the country and our province, is to follow what Jaime Casap, the self-proclaimed Google Global Education Evangelist said, and I quote:

Don't ask kids what they want to be when they grow up but what problems do they want to solve. This changes the conversation from who do I want to work for, to what do I need to learn to be able to do that” [Close quote]

44. I urge all of you to take that first step, as I invite you to visit the **Mpumalanga Youth BiZ Portal** on the address:
<http://www.mpyouthbiz.co.za/>

#mpumalangayouthbiz (Mpumalanga Youth Biz)

#mpumalangayouthmustrise (Mpumalanga Youth must rise)

45. ***Together, We Move the Youth of Mpumalanga and South Africa Forward!***

46. **Ngiyabonga/ I thank you**