

MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MRS YN PHOSA, MPL, ON THE OCASSION OF  
THE 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF *SURE LOWVELD TRAVEL* IN MBOMBELA,  
EHLANZENI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY.

Thursday, 28 November 2013

Programme Director;  
Directors of Lowveld Sure Travel;  
Members of the Media;  
Distinguished guests;  
Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Evening

I am indeed humbled and honoured, to be part of this celebration – **the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Sure Lowveld Travel***, which is one of the well-known travel agencies in the Province.

Ladies and gentlemen;

Tourism remains the ‘gold’ of Mpumalanga. We must nurture it to realise its fruit. It is against this spirit that we will continue to rigorously implement the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS). This strategy was developed in order to foster the growth of the tourism sector, and its objectives are:

- To grow the tourism sector and contribute to the GDP by more than the average GDP growth;
- To achieve transformation with the sector;
- To provide excellent people development and decent work within the sector;
- Entrench a culture of travel amongst South Africans;
- Deliver world class visitor experiences;
- Address the issue of geographical, seasonal and rural spread

Ladies and gentlemen;

The tourism sector is one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy of Mpumalanga, South Africa and in the world at large. In 2012, the global sector grew by 4% yet South Africa's tourist arrivals grew by 10.2 percent, making South Africa one of the fastest growing destinations in the world. Therefore, in order for us to hold onto and grow our global destination competitiveness, we need to provide excellence, brilliance and innovation in this regard.

The sector remains one of the most crucial sectors towards economic growth and job creation, hence statistics indicate that **One (1) out of 11 people** who wakes up every morning is employed in the sector. In addition, we have as the Provincial Government, identified tourism in the **Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path (the MEGDP)**, as one of the key sectors having the potential to create the much needed job opportunities. We have to exploit this "gold" – that is the tourism sector, if we are to **reduce poverty, unemployment and inequality**, which are the triple challenges facing our Administration.

As government, we continue to value the contribution of this sector, hence we have allocated just over 40% of the current total allocation of the Department to tourism and bio-diversity.

Ladies and gentlemen;

Mpumalanga remains a lucrative tourist destination, especially for international tourists. I am proud to announce that we have improved from **position three (3) in 2011 to position two (2) in 2012**, in terms of international arrivals, according to figures released by the South African Tourism. During the reporting period (2012), we received almost **1.4 million international tourists** as compared to 1.3 million in 2011. Our main source markets remain Europe, the US and Asia, with the US and Asia being the fastest growing markets.

In terms of domestic tourism, the Province managed move from **position six (6) to position four (4)**. This has been attributed to the increasing number of South Africans visiting our province, and this saw the number increasing from 2.2 million

in 2011 to 2.9 million in 2012. I believe that the dream for the number one (1) spot is still in the horizon.

However, the biggest challenge facing the retail travel trade over the past ten (10) years has been the recruitment and retention of customers. A primary reason for this is that human interaction in the retail travel is becoming less frequent. I want to pose a challenge to you – in order to be more customer-oriented, marketers should provide exceptional performance in quality, delivery and cost competitiveness. We have noticed with concern that the current status of the retail travel is not customer accessible and interactive, not only in Mpumalanga, but in the country as a whole.

As the industry players, you need to create an environment whereby the owners and managers of the travel agencies are accessible and interactive to the customers. The loyalty of customers can be increased when customers are provided with the opportunity to share their experiences and comments with the retail travel trade in an interactive manner.

We also need to transform this industry further. I am happy that Sure Lowveld Travel is part of a bugger franchise family. It is important that your experience should inspire other travel agencies to transform.

We must always remember the golden rule – that the customer is always right. They should be treated as 'Kings' and 'Queens' because your business will cease to exist without their patronage.

Once more, congratulations to **Lowveld Sure Travel** for achieving 30 years of service excellence. I wish you 30 more years of existence and urge to even improve your service. As government we appreciate your contribution in the industry since your inception, and wish you more successful years to come.

As I indicated, pay special attention to your customers – they are the reason why you are celebrating 30 years today, and they can be a reason of your downfall if you do not respect and take care of them.

As I close, yet another year is drawing to a close. At this time, we must take stock of the difference we have made in the lives of our people, especially the less fortunate than us, and remember them as we enter the season of giving.

May I also take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones, a ***Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year*** – filled with blessings.

**Happy 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sure Lowveld Travel**

I thank you