

***OPENING REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, Ms. NE HLOPHE, MPL, DURING THE THIRD MEETING OF THE MPUMALANGA BROAD-BASED BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (B-BBEE) ADVISORY COUNCIL***

***Friday, 08 March 2024***

Members of the Mpumalanga B-BBEE Advisory Council;  
CEOs of our Public Entities;  
Special Advisors to the Premier;  
Officials from the B-BBEE Commission;  
Officials from the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition;  
Officials from the Department;  
Ladies and gentlemen;

***Lotjhani!***

1. I am greatly honoured to be presiding over the third meeting of the Mpumalanga B-BBEE Advisory Council this morning.
2. I trust that the Council members have started the year, with even greater enthusiasm and commitment, towards attaining the goals of economic transformation.
3. The consistency and commitment displayed by Council members since its establishment, is very encouraging and **gives renewed hope that the Council will, indeed, assist Mpumalanga Province** and the country at large, to achieve a greater level of economic transformation.

4. The road towards the inclusion of the majority of our people into the mainstream of the economy is still very long; almost 30 years into democracy, we are **still grappling with very high levels of inequality** in the country.
5. The gap between the rich and the poor has further widened; statistics shared by the B-BBEE Commission in our previous Council meetings does not paint a great picture; it shows that **we are moving slowly when it comes to economic transformation.**
6. Taking from the President's State of the Nation Address, I would like to see our democracy's 30-year-old child, **Tintswalo, attaining true and full economic liberation.**
7. In the words of President Ramaphosa, and I quote: ***"The participation of the previously disadvantaged black people is increasing. Black ownership [now] stands at approximately 39%, when compared with 2% in 2004"***, unquote.
8. Members of the Council, this is a clear indication that **some advancement has been made**, but we cannot rest until the black majority fully participates in the mainstream of the economy.
9. We will continue to build an inclusive economy, focusing on the empowerment of black people, with **special attention on the target groups, that is, women, youth, and people with disability.**

10. We met as this Council in December last year, on this virtual platform, and we noted the progress made, in terms of the three work-streams or commissions that were established.
11. We acknowledge that the greater part of December and January was mainly holidays, and members also took some time off to get some rest, rejuvenate and spend time with their families.
12. Our meeting today excites me because we are all back with zoom and zeal, with one aim; that of **tracking our progress** and chart a proper way forward in terms of our work.
13. I am looking forward to fruitful and progressive deliberations, as we receive feedback from the various Work-streams or Commissions, on the work done so far.
14. I must emphasise that this **Council remains a key structure**, in supporting government to address the skewed patterns of participation in the mainstream of the economy.
15. Let us not waver; we need to forge ahead with that commitment, and make economic transformation a reality to the majority of our people.
16. ***Leave No One Behind, as We Grow Mpumalanga!***

***Ngiyathokoza!***