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MPUMALANGA PROVINCE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## MEDIA RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM (DEDT), MPUMALANGA TOURISM AND PARKS AGENCY (MTPA) AND SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL PARK (SANPARKS) ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES TO MANAGING HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT IN NSIKAZI SOUTH AREAS ADJACENT TO THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK AND MTHETHOMUSHA NATURE RESERVE

The Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDT), the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA), Kruger National Park (KNP), together with key stakeholders, are implementing a coordinated stakeholder engagement process in response to increasing incidents of human-wildlife conflict and damages caused by animals (DCA), particularly elephants and lions, in communities adjacent to the Kruger National Park (Stolznek Section) and the Mthethomusha Nature Reserve.

This collaborative initiative follows ongoing concerns raised by various community structures including the community forums and the Provincial People and Parks Structure regarding the growing impact of wildlife incursions on surrounding communities.

The parties acknowledge that various factors are intensifying human-wildlife conflict including increasing encroachment into protected area buffer zones and increasing fence breakages by elephants. As communities continue to settle, farm and undertake activities closer to wildlife habitats and movement corridors, the likelihood of dangerous interactions between people and wildlife increases significantly.

Buffer zones play a critical role in maintaining safe separation between communities and protected wildlife areas, and when these zones are compromised, both human lives and biodiversity are placed at risk. Furthermore, increasing elephant fence breakages compromise the integrity of the fence that also serves as a barrier between people and wildlife.

The Kruger National Park, the civic organization People and Parks and Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency convened a community meeting at Sipelanyana Community Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to present a fencing project to communities surrounding Kruger National Park and Mthethomusha Nature Reserve.

The project is aimed at addressing the ongoing human-wildlife conflict affecting communities bordering the two protected areas. An amount of at least R37 million has been allocated to the project, which is expected to commence and finish in the next 12 months. High quality fencing will be installed to help prevent human wildlife conflict and curb illegal poaching activities within the two protected areas.

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The stakeholder engagement process seeks to promote greater awareness of the correct procedures follow when wildlife transgresses into communal areas, the importance of respecting conservation boundaries, discouraging unlawful settlement and land-use expansion into buffer zones, and encouraging collaborative approaches to safer coexistence between communities and wildlife. Prevention measures, environmental awareness, and responsible land-use practices remain essential in reducing conflict and protecting both livelihoods and biodiversity.

Recognising the complexity of the challenge, the parties further emphasise the need for a multi-sectoral response involving Local Municipalities, the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), the House of Traditional Leaders, Provincial Disaster Management structures, and affected communities. The re-establishment and protection of buffer zones where possible, in identified hotspot areas will require coordinated planning and shared responsibility among all stakeholders.

The engagement process will also focus on strengthening environmental awareness among Traditional Leadership structures, particularly regarding the increasing allocation of land within environmentally sensitive buffer zones. There is a critical need for proactive collaboration between conservation authorities, government institutions and Traditional Leaders to ensure sustainable land allocation practices that balance community development, biodiversity conservation and public safety.

Through these engagements, the parties aim to create an inclusive platform for dialogue with all interested and affected stakeholders within and around the eight affected villages in the Nsikazi South area. Communities will be afforded an opportunity to raise concerns and contribute towards decisions relating to social, economic and environmental impacts associated with human-wildlife conflict, including issues related to livestock losses and crop damage caused by damage-causing animals (DCAs).

The parties remain committed to working together with all relevant stakeholders, importantly local community groups, Peoples and Parks to develop practical, sustainable and community-centred solutions that promote peaceful coexistence between people and wildlife while safeguarding livelihoods, public safety and the province's rich biodiversity heritage.

**Issued jointly by:**

- Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDT)
- Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA)
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**END.**

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