



## EXCO MEDIA STATEMENT

**For Immediate Release**

**All Media Houses**

**Date: 21 November 2024**

### **EXCO intensifies measures against the spread of foodborne illnesses and for the achievement of apex priorities in the province**

The Mpumalanga Premier, Mr. Mandla Ndlovu convened the sitting of the Executive Council (EXCO) to discuss a variety of pertinent issues, in relation to development and welfare of the citizens in the province. The sitting took place on Wednesday, 20 November 2024 in Mbombela.

Guided by the apex priorities of the 7<sup>th</sup> administration, EXCO deliberated on measures to be taken in a quest to deliver on the commitments made by the Premier in his address during the Opening of the Legislature in July 2024.

Furthermore, EXCO discussed at length the implementation of an integrated plan in response to the outbreak of foodborne illnesses (FBI) in the province, in light of the address by the President, Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa on Friday last week.

### **1. FOODBORNE ILLNESS (FBI) OUTBREAK INTEGRATED RESPONSE PLAN**

Food is one of the most commonly reported vehicles for foodborne illnesses worldwide. These diseases are commonly caused by consumption or ingestion of food that is contaminated with infectious organism or natural toxins, such as those found in poisonous mushrooms.

The scourge of foodborne illness is affecting the whole country, and Mpumalanga is equally affected. In the previous sitting of EXCO, a decision was taken to establish an Inter-Departmental Committee, to address the life-threatening matter, through a multi-disciplinary approach, led by MEC for Health, Ms. Sasekani Manzini as Chairperson.

A total of 365 cases related to FBI outbreaks were recorded in the province between May 2024 and November 2024.

The Committee has developed an integrated response plan to intensify measures to prevent and mitigate foodborne illnesses in the province. The plan reinforces surveillance, laboratory investigation and data management, as well as environmental health interventions.

In addition, the plan reinforces business regulation, licencing, land use rights and enforcement, raising community awareness, disaster management coordination and the provision of safety and security.

Last week, a joint operation, supported by the South African Police Services (SAPS) conducted unannounced inspection of shops in the City of Mbombela and in Emalahleni Local Municipalities. The inspections detected several violations which include unlabeled, expired, and improperly stored food items, and these products were confiscated. Shops without valid licenses were closed.

EXCO approved the plan for implementation and expressed commitment to sustain unannounced inspections. The plan will be assessed continuously.

## **2. PROVINCIAL STRATEGIC PLAN ON GBVF**

Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) remains a going concern in the country. The Mpumalanga province is not spared from the high rate of cases of women and children as victims in the scourge of the GBVF. Comparative studies have produced data which suggest an increase of sexual offences by 5.8%, attempted murder by 0.3%, rape cases by 5.2%, between the April – June 2024 period. This is attributed to poverty, inequality and unemployment amongst women, and children.

Three police stations in the province, based at Kabokweni, Pienaar and Piet Retief are listed among the thirty (30) in the country, recording high cases of sexual offences.

A Provincial Strategic Plan on GBVF has been developed to tackle the prevalence of the scourge, over the next five years. It entails six pillars designed to achieve the following, among others:

- Well-coordinated multi-sectoral and partnership-based response to GBVF through collaboration between provincial government departments, private partners and CSOs and traditional authorities to ensure effective delivery of the strategy.
- Empowered communities taking collective responsibility to eliminate GBVF.

- Reduced turnaround time for GBVF case conclusion.
- Strengthened care, support and healing services that are evidence-based and victim and survivor centered.
- Strengthened child maintenance and related support systems to address the economic vulnerability of women and children.

A Provincial Council on GBVF, Chaired by the Premier will be established to evaluate the impact. EXCO approved the plan for implementation.

### **3. SOPs FOR SECURITY SERVICES AT ALL MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SITES**

Government is stepping up security measures in government facilities for the safety of the public. EXCO is concerned about criminal cases that put the lives of people in danger, including the vulnerable groups in the society. The state is counting losses worth of millions of rands due to theft.

In a quest to mitigate the scale of these challenges, the Provincial Government has developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which place the safety of the citizens and assets within the premises of state facilities, at the centre.

The SOPs prescribe preventative, detection and corrective security measures to be implemented in all the sites of the Provincial Government, in order to prevent unauthorized access and theft of assets.

They are in line with applicable security legislation. They are mandatory to among others, Security Managers and Security Officers who must comply with the Code of Conduct. All employees and visitors are also bound by the SOPs for compliance.

The SOP prescribes the following:

- Not to enter any government building without the permission of a Security Officer.
- Furnish particulars and Identity Document.
- Search vehicles when leaving the site.
- Goods or store items and equipment shall not be permitted to leave the site without signed exit permit or gate pass.
- All visitors to be subjected to physical search and to declare weapons in their possessions.
- A visitor shall be accredited with the access pass or permit, which must be displayed visibly.
- Unfamiliar persons found in the buildings shall be requested to produce their visitor's card.
- The Security Officer shall be required to search vehicles, any boxes, briefcases for any prohibited items, and these must be opened by the owner

and Security Officers are not permitted to put their hands into another person's bag or pockets.

EXCO approved the SOPs for implementation, to eliminate human risks and theft of state assets within the premises of government facilities.

#### **4. THE DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS STATE-OWNED HOUSES**

EXCO deliberated about a plan to dispose state-owned houses. Government employees, who are the legal occupants, stand to benefit from the process, as home owners.

EXCO took into consideration that the number of houses to be disposed is 1 493, and that the process will be implemented in phases, of which 171 houses have been identified for the first phase.

Previous attempts to dispose the houses were hampered by a number of factors, including a court case, of which the outcome was in favour of the government.

EXCO approved the process which entails a 20% discount for the first time home-owners and 10% for second time home-owners. It was resolved that the houses be sold in the market should the current occupants decline the offer.

#### **5. APPOINTMENTS**

EXCO approved the appointment of Board members of the Nkomazi Special Economic Zone. Seven (7) members were appointed, with one official from the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), nominated to be part of the Board. The recruitment to fill the remaining two (2) vacancies is underway. The Board members are appointed for a period of five (5) years.

- Mr. Victor Windvoel – Chairperson
- Dr Nontobeko Mahlalela
- Dr. David Dube
- Ms. Yvonne Mbane
- Mr. Mafika Nkosi
- Mr. Simon Malatjie
- Mr. Craig Padayachee.

#### **Issued by the Mpumalanga Provincial Government**

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