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## EXCO MEDIA STATEMENT

### For Immediate Release

### All Media Houses

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### PREMIER NDLOVU CONVENES PROVINCIAL COORDINATING FORUM TO ALIGN GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

The Premier of Mpumalanga, Mr Mandla Ndlovu convened the Premier's Coordinating Forum (PCF) on Monday, bringing together the departments and municipalities to align government plans on service delivery.

The PCF is a strategic gathering of Members of the Executive Council (MECs) and Executive Mayors of the Districts and Local Municipalities, and serves as the primary intergovernmental platform to strengthen the coordination of the two spheres of government.

The sitting deliberated extensively on service delivery, infrastructure and institutional issues that are linked to the priorities of the 7<sup>th</sup> Administration, to improve the socio-economic conditions of people in Mpumalanga. Reports linked to these issues were presented, among them, the Public Protector's investigation of complaints.

### PUBLIC PROTECTOR'S REPORT

A report by the Public Protector (PP), containing investigations of at least 42 complaints from provincial departments, and 77 from the municipalities, was presented. For the departments, the investigation focuses on poor service delivery, water challenges, allocation of RDP houses, poor infrastructure, and administrative deficiencies, amongst others. For municipalities the billing system, incomplete projects, sewer blockages and administration failures feature prominently in the report.

The PCF noted that the PP's remedial action is binding, and can only be set aside by a court of law. Furthermore, it was noted that challenges regarding the implementation of recommendations are not communicated on time with the PP.

The PCF resolved to enhance the response time to inquiries from the Public Protector's office, thereby ensuring that investigations proceed efficiently without being hindered by administrative delays.

### PAYMENT OF MUNICIPAL DEBTS

Government departments are among debtors listed in the debt books of municipalities. This is as a result of water and electricity bills which municipalities provide.

The PCF expressed concern that the failure of the departments to settle outstanding debts is detrimental to the municipalities' service delivery efforts. PCF urged provincial departments to lead by example through repayment.

PCF directed municipalities to implement credit control and debt collection measures to curb the rising debts. Furthermore, municipalities were directed to step up debt collection measures, including businesses.

## **AGREEMENT BETWEEN ESKOM AND MUNICIPALITIES**

The PCF discussed extensively the Eskom debt owed by several municipalities in the province. This as municipalities are exploring various measures to address the rising electricity debt.

Amongst the contributing factors for the high debts, are the poor revenue collection and electricity losses.

The PCF noted that Eskom has introduced the Distribution Agency Agreement (DAA), designed to support municipalities in the management of their electricity operations, revenue collection and payment performance.

In Mpumalanga, five municipalities have been identified for the DAA arrangement, namely: Govan Mbeki, Lekwa, eMalahleni, City of Mbombela, and Thaba Chweu Local Municipalities.

The Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (COGHSTA) in collaboration with the Provincial Treasury, the Districts and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) will soon meet Eskom to discuss the agreement, and the first meeting will take place on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2026.

The PCF supported the decision to sign the agreement as one of the measures to resolve the Eskom debt.

## **LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (LED) FORUMS**

Local Economic Development (LED) forums are crucial levers that stimulate economic growth and employment opportunities at the local level. They play a meaningful role as primary platforms of collaboration between the government, the private sector, and civil society. Their support manifest in the effective functionality of Small, Medium and Macro Enterprises (SMMEs), which stimulate job creation.

The PCF noted a number of initiatives designed to support the LED initiatives, among them, capacity building by the Municipal Institute of Learning, and hosting of investment summits by the Chief Albert Luthuli and Nkomazi Local Municipalities as well as Ehlanzeni District, to attract investors.

Several job intensive projects, to be implemented in various phases were also presented, including the following:

- *The Nkomazi Special Economic Zone (SEZ)*, with a projection of above 8 000 jobs during the construction phase, more than 9 000 industrial jobs, and agricultural jobs exceeding 81 000.

- *The Development of Petrochemical Industrial Technology Park* in Govan Mbeki, with a projection of 1 970 direct jobs.
- *The Energy Special Economic Zone (SEZ)* in Steve Tshwete, with an estimated number of more than 2500 jobs.

The disruption of LED forums in Msukaligwa and Lekwa Local Municipalities was reported, and viewed as a threat towards the attainment of economic objectives of the municipalities. The PCF observed that individuals claiming to be local business forums, orchestrate the disruptions.

PCF resolved to convene a meeting with key stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies to step up measures to halt the disruptions, and for the perpetrators to be arrested.

### **PROVINCIALISATION OF LIBRARY SERVICES**

An outcome of an assessment of library services in the province was presented to enhance the management of libraries and address the existing inefficiencies and challenges that inhibit the delivery of effective library services. In addition, it sought to align library services with applicable legislation, through the transfer of the function from municipalities to the DCSR.

Library services are the competency of the Provincial Government, and therefore the PCF resolved to transfer the function to the latter. This decision will be implemented over a period of three financial years, through a phased-in approach. Phase 1 will be implemented in the 2027/2028 financial year, while Phase 2 and Phase 3 in the 2028/2029 and 2029/2030 financial years respectively.

### **PROVINCIAL TOURISM SAFETY STRATEGY**

Tourism is one of the cornerstone of Mpumalanga's economic development, generating substantial employment opportunities and supporting broader economic initiatives. The sector attracts local and international tourists, and is ranked the second most visited province, generating 2.7 million arrivals in 2025.

Research studies and media reports have identified tourism safety as a serious challenge in Mpumalanga. A Provincial Tourism Safety Strategy was presented to reinforce Mpumalanga's image as a safe tourism destination, to improve the rankings, as a leading tourist destination in the country.

The role of various structures, key among them, the Tourism Safety Forum and the Enforcement Task Force, are an integral part of the strategy. The strategy prioritises communication and security technologies as pillars that drive the narrative of tourism safety.

PCF noted that monitoring cameras have been installed in designated areas, with security patrols. In addition, the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) in partnership with the tourism private sector have established a 24hrs tourism hotline of 066 300 0991 for tourists visiting the province.

The PCF approved the implementation of the strategy as a measure to attract an influx of tourists to the province.

**Ends.**

Issued by the Mpumalanga Provincial Government  
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