

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM,
MS. MAKHOSAZANE MSILELA, MPL, DURING THE OCCASION OF THE HERITAGE
POP-UP MARKET CELEBRATION HELD AT STANDERTON, LEKWA LOCAL
MUNICIPALITY**

Thursday, 26 September 2024

Programme Director;

Executive mayor of Gert Sibande District Municipality, Councillor Walter Mngomezulu

Our host, the Executive Mayor of Lekwa Local Municipality, Councillor Delani Thabethe;

Other Councillors present;

Acting Head of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Mr. Lemmy Mdluli;

Our Regional Director, Mr Douglas Ndwandwe;

Provincial Manager of SEDA, Mr Mandla Sibiya;

Our strategic partner Sasol;

Officials from the Department and SEDA;

Members of the media present

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Sanibonani! Good morning

1. Programme Director, thank you so much for affording me this opportunity to address this **Pop-up Market event**, which is geared towards empowering our SMMEs in this Municipality. This event is taking place during a significant month of September, which is celebrated as tourism month.
 2. I do not have any doubt, that the Tourism Month is an opportune time to celebrate the rich tapestry of our Province's beauty and cultural diversity. It allows us to showcase the countless wonders that makes Mpumalanga a true gem of the country.
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3. As tourism month draws to a close, tomorrow, the 28th of September, we are hosting the Makhonjwa Mountain Marathon. This is a race qualifier towards the Two Oceans and the Comrades Marathon. You are all invited to participate in the Marathon.
4. Going back to the business the day, our focus and priority as the 7th Administration is the implementation of socio-economic interventions aimed at intent and resolve to maximise job creation, eradicate poverty and reduce inequality. We have also committed to work with private sector and our social partners to create jobs for our people and support entrepreneurship development.
5. Therefore, you will agree with me when I say that this Pop-up market is one strategic intervention that seeks to breathe life to government's resolve to support small businesses and create a conducive environment for them to thrive.
6. As the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, one crucial function within our mandate, is **to support SMMEs and cooperatives by empowering and nurturing** them. **SMMEs are, in fact, the backbone of our economy**, and if we do not support them, our economy will not grow, it will become stagnant.
7. Programme Director, I must indicate that this event comes few days after we launched the Mpumalanga Tourism Youth Fund, in partnership with the National Youth Development Agency. Surely, the launch of the Youth fund was another clearest indication yet that as government when we say we are committed to support Small businesses we are not grand standing or throwing empty rhetoric.
8. Equally, I am excited to be part of this **Pop-up Market** initiative, precisely because it does not only provide our SMMEs with the much-needed platform to showcase their products, but it also provide a strategic intervention to address the access to market challenge faced by majority of small enterprises in the Province and the country.

9. We welcome this partnership between SEDA, the Lekwa Local Municipality and the private sector for organising and hosting this very important Gert Sibande District Pop-up market aimed at empowering SMMEs, under the theme, ***“Show Love To Local Brands”***.
10. Having said that, allow me to extend my profound gratitude to the partners who made this event a success. The contribution that this Pop-up market will make to SMME development and economic growth of Mpumalanga is unparalleled.
11. Ladies and gentlemen, the Department will continue to support initiatives such as the Pop-up market, given its potential to boost SMMEs and grow the economy of the Province. Growing the economy of the Province is at the apex of our priorities, and it is the only vehicle that will aid us to realise our commitment of creating 100 000 new and sustainable jobs every year.
12. Programme Director, as already indicated, the overarching objective of this pop-up market is to create the much-needed access to markets for local brands by providing a platform for local entrepreneurs to showcase and sell their products, while encouraging the community of Lekwa to buy locally produced products. As the saying goes, ***Charity begins at home***.
13. It is a fact that small enterprises, particularly those from the township and rural areas in the manufacturing and services sector, require linkages to the mainstream economy and this pop-up market is one of the initiatives which is geared towards achieving exactly that.
14. As government, we are duty-bound to open up equal opportunities for our SMMEs without any fear of contradictions. All the main sectors that we have prioritized as a province, to grow the provincial economy and create jobs, SMMEs must feature high on initiatives driven by government.

15. In line with the manifesto of the governing party, the African National Congress, the 7th Administration reaffirm its commitment to be at the forefront in facilitating support to SMMEs by providing access to markets and stimulate entrepreneurship and small business development in local communities.
16. Economic transformation remain close to the heart of the governing party, the ANC, in this province. We hold the view that SMME development remain the appropriate vehicle to drive the economic transformation agenda. The participation of our SMMEs in the mainstream economy cannot be postponed anymore.
17. Accordingly, we are going to intensify our partnerships with all the government institutions established to support the development of SMMEs. This includes the various Development Financial Institutions such as yourself (SEDA), training and skills development institutions and SETAs, including the South African Bureau of Standard.
18. Programme Director, we have committed during the tabling of the Policy and Budget Speech in August, that we will continue to strengthen the support provided to SMME development. Therefore, the Department will continue to provide an enabling environment for SMMEs to grow through the provision of financial and non-financial support.
19. In this regard, we commit to implement government policies designed to support SMME development such as the set-aside policies on designated products. The time has come that we start to monitor very closely the utilisation of government procurement to promote the development of SMMEs. We need a radical paradigm shift. If it calls for the review of the entire procurement value chain, let it be.

20. The support to small enterprises operating in Township and Rural Areas is one of the priorities that the Department will be pursuing going forward. I have already tasked the Department to look at better and efficient ways to promote sustainable SMMEs in the township and Rural areas. One hopes that this new framework will assist the Department, as well as the Province, to develop sustainable and viable small businesses in these targeted areas.
21. Furthermore, the Department will strengthen partnerships with municipalities to ensure that the regulatory environment in the township and rural areas is conducive for business to thrive without experiencing cumbersome red tape.
22. To this end, the Department has developed a **Red Tape Reduction Strategy** to provide support to municipalities in easing the way of doing business by SMMEs and the broader informal sector.
23. In line with our legislative mandate, the Department will further support Small businesses to participate in key sectors such as mining, green economy and manufacturing.
24. As I close, I call upon the private sector to continue to partner with government on the journey of creating self-sufficient small businesses by transferring skills and providing the much-needed financial injection to these businesses.
25. Programme Director, let me conclude by wishing all the SMMEs who are participating in the Pop-up market all the best. We are hoping that this noble initiative by SEDA and its partners will be able to unlock the potential of your businesses. Undoubtedly, SMMEs are the cornerstone of the economy, and therefore, as government we remain steadfast in our resolve to empower and development small enterprises.

We Leave No One Behind, as we continue to grow the economy of Mpumalanga

I thank you