

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM,
MS. MAKHOSAZANE MSILELA, MPL, DURING THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF
THE MPUMALANGA TOURISM YOUTH FUND HELD AT THE MANYELETI GAME
RESERVE, BUSHBUCKRIDGE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

Thursday, 19 September 2024

Programme Director; Ms. Immy Serakalala;

Our host, the Executive Mayor of the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, Councillor Lydia Moroane-Zitha;

Other Councillors present;

Acting Head of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Mr. Lemmy Mdluli;
MTPA Board Chairperson, Mr Victor Mashego;

Other MTPA Board members present;

NYDA Board Member, Mr Thulisa Ndlela;

Acting CEO of the MTPA, Mr. Justus Mohlala;

Our strategic partners in the tourism and private sector in general;

Officials from the Department, the MTPA and the NYDA;

Members of the media present

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Sanibonani! Good morning

1. Programme Director, it is an honour and privilege, to address this historic occasion of the launch of the **Mpumalanga Tourism Youth Fund** during Tourism Month. The choice of Manyeleti Game Reserve as the venue to host this historic launch is not a coincidence, but it gives credence to our ongoing crusade to promote and create awareness of the importance of domestic tourism.
2. Without a doubt, our gathering here today, is not only for the purposes of officially launching the Mpumalanga Tourism Youth Fund, but to also celebrate the visionary leadership of those who conceptualised, crafted and facilitated the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement that gave birth to this historic fund.
3. Having said that, allow me to extend my profound gratitude to officials from both the Department and the National Youth Development Agency for putting the youth of the Province at the apex of our priorities. The contribution that this fund will make to youth development and economic growth of Mpumalanga is unparalleled.
4. I must however, indicate that I am concerned that the MOA will only run for three years. You will agree with me when I say the challenges facing the youth cannot be fully address in such a short space of time. For me, the time frame which the MOA will run, will only allow us to merely scratch the surface.
5. Accordingly, for us to make a serious dent to the challenges facing youth owned enterprises, I am hoping that this partnership will be extended beyond the three years. The partnership must be harnessed and nurtured so that it continues to drive the empowerment agenda of our youth owned enterprises in the tourism sector.
6. Ladies and gentlemen, this initiative aims to empower youth-led enterprises in the tourism sector, recognising the importance of tourism as a key driver of economic development in the Province.

7. To this end, the fund will stimulate innovation, create jobs, and promote sustainable business growth, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas of the Province.
8. In addition, this youth fund is designed to effectively transition young people into the mainstream economy through business funding and entrepreneurship support, aimed at unlocking the potential of youth owned enterprises in the tourism sector to grow and contribute to the provincial economy and reduce the high rate of youth unemployment.
9. Programme Director, this partnership serves as a strategic youth empowerment intervention which seeks to address the challenges of youth access to finances to support their innovative ideas in the development of the economy and creation of jobs in the tourism sector. We hold the view that youth empowerment remain the appropriate vehicle to drive the economic transformation agenda.
10. Therefore, the launch of this fund gives me renewed hope that we are on course to realising the commitment we made during the Policy and Budget Speech in August, where we committed to create **100 000 new and sustainable jobs every year**.
11. The tourism sector has a huge potential to contribute meaningfully to the growth of the provincial economy and job creation. Therefore, as the Department, we will continue to support initiatives such as the Mpumalanga Tourism Youth Fund, given its potential to boost youth-owned enterprises in the tourism sector.
12. Programme Director, the Department has just concluded its three-day Strategic Planning Session. The purpose of the Strategic Planning Session was to come up with plans which will determine what we do for the next five years in order to fulfil our mandate.

13. During my opening address at the Strategic Planning Session, I directed the Department and its Public Entities to strengthen support to youth-owned enterprises operating in township and rural areas.
14. In this regard, my expectation is that the plans that came out of the Strategic Planning will give impetus to government's commitment to support youth owned enterprises to participate in key sectors of the economy such as tourism, mining, green economy and manufacturing.
15. As I close, let me take this opportunity to caution those who will be charged with the responsibility to award the funding to our young people, that when they disburse the funding, they must ensure that it goes those businesses who meet the requirements. Simply put, the funding must be disbursed to those youth-owned enterprises that are deserving.
16. Lastly, the application process and all processes around the awarding of the funding must be transparent, and must be anchored on the principle of integrity. Also, let us ensure that the process is not cumbersome, and does not exclude young people from rural and township areas.
17. Programme Director; we can now confirm, without any shadow of doubt, that Mpumalanga tourism is open to do business with young people. It is, thus, my profound pleasure, to **launch the historic Mpumalanga Tourism Youth Fund.**
18. ***We Leave No One Behind, as we continue to grow the economy of Mpumalanga***

I thank you