

STATEMENT BY THE MPUMALANGA MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, Ms. MAKHOSAZANE MASILELA, MPL, DURING THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES DEBATE ON VOTE 10: ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY DURING A HYBRID SITTING

Wednesday, 09 July 2025

Honourable Chairperson of the NCOP, **Ms. Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane;**

Honourable Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP;

Esteemed Members of the National Council of Provinces;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen

San'bonani!

1. Chairperson, thank you very much for affording me this opportunity to participate in this very important debate, which seeks to deliberate and consolidate plans on how to ensure continued reliability and security of electricity supply, potentially through investments in renewable energy projects and grid infrastructure.
2. However, before I deal with the business of the day, allow me to take this opportunity to join millions of South Africans in paying tribute to the late Deputy President of South Africa, Mr. David Dabede Mabuza.
3. Honourable Members, we are meeting here at the time when our Province, Mpumalanga and the country at large is engulfed by a dark cloud, following the untimely death of the former Premier of Mpumalanga, Mr. Mabuza, affectionately known as "the Cat".

4. Mr. Mabuza is the former Chairperson of the African National Congress in Mpumalanga, and he later became the Deputy President of the ANC.
 5. Mabuza will be remembered for his fearless and tireless commitment to the cause of liberation, dedicating the greater part of his life to the achievement of peace, democracy and justice in South Africa. We dip our revolutionary banner in honour of this patriot.
 6. Coming back to the business of the day - it is common course that reliable energy supply is the cornerstone for any country to develop economically. In this regard, I am extremely excited to be part of this debate because it talks to the main ingredient for economic growth and job creation. Without a doubt, you will agree with me when I say electricity is essential to propel small enterprises to reach greater heights.
 7. Government has placed MSMEs at the centre of its economic transformation agenda. This assertion is expressed sharply in The Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path – our economic blueprint that is guiding the Province on issues of economic growth and development, including job creation.
 8. During the days of server load shedding, many businesses, particularly small enterprises were forced to close their businesses, which led to massive job losses. Load shedding undermined investor confidence and hampered economic growth.
 9. During those dark days, part among other things, load shedding presented the country with severe economic impact. In relation to productivity, regrettably, businesses decreased productivity due to power interruptions. Rolling blackouts and unplanned electricity outages impacted on various labour intensive sectors such as retail, mining and agriculture.
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10. Now, the establishment of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy by the President, amid serious opposition, is starting to bear fruits. Honourable Members will agree with me when I assert that since the creation of the Ministry, energy security has improved exponentially.
 11. As a result, public confidence on the supply of electricity has sky rocketed. We should therefore, as a collective applaud both the President of the Republic and the Minister of Electricity and Energy for the visionary leadership they displayed in dealing with the energy crisis in the country.
 12. The Ministry, under the leadership of Minister Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa has been able to decisively deal with the issue of load shedding in South Africa. Given where we are coming from as a country, it will be disingenuous of us to fail to acknowledge the good work by the Ministry in its pursuit to uproot load shedding.
 13. Chairperson, Mpumalanga is at the forefront of South Africa's Just Transition. Historically dependent on coal, we now face the opportunity to transform economic challenges into sustainable development opportunities, creating space for small enterprises to innovate, grow, and support environmental sustainability.
 14. Accordingly, we have facilitated the establishment of **the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency** to drive our developmental agenda on the green economy space.
 15. In relation to opportunities for small enterprises and cooperatives in the green and renewable energy space, the Province offers accessible opportunities to MSMEs in infrastructure development, notably through initiatives like the Nkomazi Special Economic Zones, the Mpumalanga Fresh Produce Market, and the Technology Parks in all the regions, as well as utility scale projects by private developers.
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16. Our province has proactively explored **green economy opportunities** through a **cluster development model**, engaging **government, business, and academia** to drive sustainable growth.
 17. Our province is deeply rooted in South Africa's energy legacy. Mpumalanga is home to approximately **80% of the country's coal reserves** and hosts **11 of Eskom's 15 coal-fired power stations**, making it the historical heartland of coal-based energy production.
 18. This endowment has powered the nation for decades, but it has also shaped our economy, labour patterns, and communities in profound ways. As we transition, we must not only address the socio-economic implications of this shift—but we must also **embrace innovation as the engine of our renewal**.
 19. It is through innovative thinking, technologies, and solutions that we will repurpose our legacy infrastructure and unlock new, green pathways for inclusive growth.
 20. In this regard, we have introduced a competition called the **Mpumalanga Green Innovation Challenge** in order to contribute towards the unlocking of new innovative green pathways in the Province, for all stakeholders to contribute to reducing unemployment, poverty, and inequality. We will apply pressure on our agencies, clusters, and partners to ensure these opportunities manifest in Mpumalanga.
 21. Government has positioned the **Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency (MGCA)** to play a vital role in this journey, serving as the **secretariat** for the **Just Transition and Climate Change Committee** in our province.
 22. Through initiatives such as the **Mpumalanga Green Innovation Challenge**, we continue to solidify our influence in shaping **South Africa's green economy**, ensuring that this transition is truly **just—leaving no one behind**.
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23. Together, we can build a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable green economy in Mpumalanga. Let us leverage this innovation competition to shape prosperous future benefiting businesses, communities, and our environment.
24. Economic transformation remain close to the heart of the ruling party in this province. We hold the view that MSME development remain the appropriate vehicle to drive the economic transformation agenda. The participation of the previously disadvantaged people in the mainstream of the economy cannot be postponed anymore.
25. Accordingly, in our quest to strengthen support to small enterprises and cooperatives, we rely on uninterrupted electricity supply. Therefore, we have a responsibility to ensure that we provide reliable electricity to our small enterprises and communities at large.
26. As I conclude my debate, we extend our appreciation to the Minister of Electricity and Energy, and his team for the milestone they continue to register of ensuring consecutive days without load shedding. We are confident that the days of load shedding are behind us, and that the lights will be kept on.

I thank you.
