

**STATEMENT BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MS. MAKHOSAZANE MASILELA, MPL, DURING THE OCCASION OF RELEASING THE FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE ALLEGATION OF MALADMINISTRATION AND CORRUPTION AT MTPA, HELD AT MEC BOARDROOM, NOKUTHULA SIMELANE BUILDING**

***Friday, 06 June 2025***

Members of the media;

***Good morning!***

1. Thank you very much for honouring this media invitation for the much-anticipated report into the investigation of the alleged maladministration, corruption and or fraud at the MTPA as it relates to its implementation of projects at the Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains World Heritage Site.
2. As the Fourth Estate (The Media), we do not take your presence here today likely, precisely because you have an important role to serve as a watchdog over government. We recognize and acknowledge your ability to influence public opinion.
3. From the onset, I want to assure the people of Mpumalanga and the country that this government is committed to clean, ethical and transparent governance.

4. Therefore, I deem it necessary and believe it is in the public interest to release the findings of the investigation to the public.
5. The 7<sup>th</sup> Administration has made a commitment to the public that it will not tolerate corruption, fraud and mismanagement of public funds. We have vehemently declared zero tolerance to corruption and maladministration.
6. Just to give you context on the matter, as the Executive Authority responsible for the entity, I was first alerted by concerned stakeholders including landowners about the allegations of maladministration and corruption at Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains Heritage Site, pertaining the appointment of service providers and implementation of projects.
7. The allegations relate to amongst others, alleged financial misconduct, irregular appointments of service providers and non-compliance with prescripts in the implementation of the projects such as ***(i) Upgrading of the geotrail, (ii) Compilation of the Integrated Management Plan (IMP), (iii) Visitor Information Centre, (IV) Installation of the directional Signage of the World Heritage Site.***
8. Subsequent thereto, I informed the Board of MTPA about the allegations on 24 July 2024. The Board held its meeting on 26 July 2024 where it resolved to place the CEO, Mr. Mduduzi Vilakazi on precautionary suspension, pending the investigation.

9. Subsequently, Mr. Vilakazi was placed on precautionary suspension on 05 August 2024, and the Forensic Investigation was instituted by the Board, of which the investigation was completed and a report submitted to the Board on 19 May 2025.
10. The investigation found that there is a prima facie case against the CEO and some officials at MTPA, which warrants for disciplinary processes to be instituted against them by the entity.
11. Now, you will agree with me when I assert that the disciplinary process is a necessary instrument to implement consequence management, and this shall be done in full compliance with applicable legal prescripts such as the principle of ***Audi Alteram Partem*** and the principle of **Natural Justice**, as espoused in our legal system.
12. Therefore, I welcome the findings of the investigation, and I expect the Board to expedite the disciplinary processes as it relates to the CEO and the other officials so that the matter is concluded expeditiously, without any delay.
13. As soon as the disciplinary processes are finalized, I commit myself to convene a similar media briefing to update you and the public at large regarding the outcomes and findings in this regard.
14. I must indicate that this investigation was in line with the 3 (three) priorities of the 7th Administration, with special attention to the priority of ***“Building a Capable, Ethical and Developmental State”***.

**I thank you**