

KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MS. MC MASILELA, MPL, DURING THE OCCASION OF THE 2024 PROVINCIAL TOURISM CAREERS EXPO HELD AT THE SYDNEY CHOMA BANQUET HALL, MIDDELBURG, STEVE TSHWETE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Wednesday, 04 September 2024

Programme Director; Ms Immy Serakalala

Executive Mayor of Nkangala District Municipality, Councillor Thomas Ngwenya;

Our host, the Executive Mayor of the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, Councillor Mhlonishwa Masilela;

Other Councillors present;

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

MTPA Board Chairperson, Mr Victor Mashego;

Other Board members present;

The Acting CEO of the MTPA, Mr. Justus Mohlala;

Director of Tourism in our Department, Mr. Doctor Mdluli;

Regional Tourism Organisation and all Exhibitors resents;

Officials from the Provincial Government, Municipality and the MTPA present;

Our most valuable guests – the learners, students and their educators;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Sanibonani! Good Morning

1. Programme Director: It is such an honor and privilege for me to be here today, at the **Third instalment** of the Mpumalanga Tourism Exhibition Careers Expo. I am excited to be part of those playing a strategic role in the process of shaping future leaders.

2. I must indicate from the onset, that this is my inaugural Provincial Tourism Exhibition Careers Expo since my appointment by Premier, Mandla Ndlovu to head the portfolio of Economic Development and Tourism. After taking oath of office, Premier Ndlovu gave me the marching orders to focus on tourism development and growth.
3. Today we get to meet our future leaders, game changers, risk takers, future policy makers and nation builders. As young people, today you look very energetic with a great zeal of appetite for learning.
4. The Mpumalanga Tourism Exhibition Careers Expo is today celebrating its 3rd year. It is a collaboration of the three partners, namely; our Department, the Provincial Department of Education, and the National Department.
5. Programme Director, tourism remains the world's fastest growing employment sector that continues to adapt to new trends. During my maiden Departmental Policy and Budget Speech last month in August, we committed to create around **100 000 new and sustainable jobs every year** if we are to achieve the Mpumalanga Vision 2030 employment target of 2.1 million by 20230.
6. As we speak, the tourism sector remains the key economic sector to sustain those jobs. All we need is to boost the talent pool in our Province and ensure that a demand-led skills supply in the sector remains pivotal.
7. The Tourism Careers Expo is designed to bridge the information gap between the industry, government, learners and educators. The expo aims to drive the goal of the National Tourism Sector Strategy to create the much-needed jobs by 2026.
8. Themed "**Tourism and Peace – 30 years of connecting people, places and culture**" the 2024 Provincial Careers Expo aims to show case the plethora of opportunities that exist in tourism as the sector works towards economic recovery.

9. The theme highlights how the government, sector stakeholders and the private sector have invested in tourism to drive initiatives that create opportunities for world peace.
10. Our mission is to inspire the present and prospective tourism learners and unemployed youth to rise to new heights in search for tourism careers and professional opportunities. The purpose of the Provincial Tourism Careers Expo is provide a platform for the sector to create awareness on the available careers and professional opportunities in the tourism industry and give the learners/students opportunities to interact with their potential employers.

Its Objectives seek to:

- Highlight the skills development challenges and potential solutions within the sector;
 - Highlight initiatives and programmes that are set to drive recovery;
 - Showcase partner contribution towards skills development, education and training in tourism; and
 - Showcase inclusive growth initiatives in the tourism sector.
11. Programme Director, career opportunities in tourism are limitless. The hospitality and tourism industry presents a unique career path for professionals who specialize in creating the finest guest experiences.
 12. Indeed, tourism is a conduit for people to learn new things and discover the world through its diverse cultures. Careers found in the tourism value chain range from food and beverage, cruise ships, transport, adventure tourism, travel trade, events and conferences, tour operators, tourism entrepreneurs, travel bloggers – the list is endless, and the opportunities are limitless.

13. This Expo therefore, seeks to inspire our young people to take advantage of these career opportunities, but it is **strategically organised to encourage our learners to consider the tourism sector, as a career and profession of choice.**
14. We, therefore, hereby invite the youth to be active participants in this session, as we invest in tourism as the career and profession of choice. I can assure you that a career in tourism is very exciting, and you will not regret for choosing it.
15. We want to urge the learners and students, to visit various exhibition stalls her today, to enquire and to receive information about various careers in tourism and associated industries.
16. As the ANC-led government, collaborating with stakeholders both in the public and private sectors, we are committed to ensure that this Career Expo, goes a long way to nurture and shape your exciting and bright future ahead of you.
17. We will **hold you by the hand**, as you navigate the waters towards an exciting journey in the tourism industry.
18. Programme Director; we recognise the challenge that our communities face when the demand for skills cannot be met, and unemployment persists because individuals do not have the appropriate skills needed by prospective employers.
19. We thus, commit to **contribute meaningfully, towards closing this gap of appropriate skills shortage**, so that we can build a strong pool of skills needed to grow our economy.

20. Programme Director; this Tourism Careers Expo also responds to some of the key findings identified in the tourism human resource development research conducted in 2008, which reflects that:

- The tourism industry is perceived to provide menial and low paying jobs, with long working hours, and no career progression;
- Tourism was a non-designated subject in high schools and tertiary level, but designation has been scrapped lately;
- Tourism is a subject perceived to be chosen by the “less intelligent”;
- Tourism is an easy subject that is mostly taught by educators who do not have tourism qualifications;
- Tourism education and training is supply driven; and that
- Tourism future human resource supply is not certain and well planned for.

21. In our quest to make careers in tourism fashionable, we **run some tourism intellectual challenging competitions** in our districts, which culminated into the Provincial elimination competition for learners.

22. The competition was divided into four (4) categories; namely, ***Tourism Public Speaking; Baking for Hospitality; Consumer Studies Food Production; Consumer Studies Soft Furnishings (Cushions).***

23. The winners of the respective Districts competitions participated in the Provincial competition, which took place at Gert Sibande TVET College, Standerton Campus and will be announced today. The overall winners will then represent our Province at the upcoming National Tourism Careers Expo, to be held in Limpopo Province, next month on the 8 – 10 October 2024.

24. Those who participated at the Provincial Competition, but did not win, will still have an opportunity to attend the 2024 National Tourism Careers Expo. This is meant to provide the learners a valuable opportunity to interact with the different tourism players, tourism product owners, and potential employers, institutions of higher learning, motivational speakers, and so forth.
25. Programme Director; before I retreat, let me take this opportunity to commend and thank the Tourism Programme in our Department, under the leadership of Mr. Doctor Mdluli, our sister Department of Education, our own Public Entity, the MTPA, for prioritising this important aspect of skills development for tourism growth.
26. As I close, please join me in the announcement of the overall winners of the four (4) categories of this year's Provincial Tourism Careers Expo. I look forward to seeing you in future, as tourism practitioners and entrepreneurs, ready to prosper this beautiful Province of Mpumalanga, *The Place of the Rising Sun!*
27. ***Leave No One Behind; and Let's Grow Mpumalanga Together***, through inclusive tourism!

I thank you