

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, Ms. MC MASILELA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE TAKEALOT TOWNSHIP ECONOMY INITIATIVE HELD AT KROMDRAAI CAMP, SONGIMVELO NATURE RESERVE, CHIEF ALBERT LUTHULI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Friday, 25 October 2024

Thank you!

Programme Director, Ms. Zanele Makam;

Our host, the Executive Mayor of Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality,
Cllr. Mbuso Magubane;

All MMCs and councillors present;

Inkosi Thulani Nkosi of the Somcuba Bevula Traditional Authority;

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

Municipal Manager of Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality, Mr. Ephraim
Thabethe;

Acting CEO of MTPA, Mr. Maimane Justus Mohlala;

Takealot Group Executive External Affairs and Public Policy, Mr. Tshepo
Marumule, and his team;

Representatives of the Small Enterprise Development and Finance
Agency (SEDFA), and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA),
Mr. Mandla Sibiya and Ms. Precious Nkosi, respectively;

Officials from our Department, the municipality, SOEs and our public
entities;

Distinguished guests, our SMMEs and businesspeople;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

San'bonani!

1. I am humbled, honoured and very excited to stand before you, as we are about to **launch a historic partnership**, which is anticipated to change the face of the economy of our townships.
2. Let me begin by expressing my profound gratitude to you, for honouring our invitation. Let me also extend my appreciation to the **Takealot Group**, led by the Group CEO, for their commitment towards the Township Economy Initiative. **Mr. Zietsman**, you are warmly welcomed to Mpumalanga - *the Place of the Rising Sun!*
3. Mr. Zietsman, our Department is not only all about SMME support and development, **we also do tourism and we do it well**; hence we have deliberately chosen this venue for this launch, so that we can also **expose you to our tourism side of things**.
4. I hope you will enjoy the serenity of this nature reserve, to the point that you will come back to experience more, and you will even tell others about it.
5. Programme Director; we are gathered here to witness the sealing of a ground-breaking partnership between **the Department of Economic Development and Tourism and the Takealot Group**.
6. This partnership is undoubtedly, more than just an economic collaboration, but a **commitment which will create jobs** through a series of programmes.

7. The partnership seeks to accelerate our endeavours, towards building sustainable and viable small businesses in the Province.
8. As we are all aware, **government has placed SMMEs 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.
9. Of course, it is our conviction as government that, if we are to change the economic landscape of our Province for the better, **we have to bring SMMEs into the fold of the mainstream economy**.
10. SMMEs and cooperatives are the backbone of any economy; they even **create more jobs than big businesses**, and contribute far much more to the economy; hence we are resolute in our approach to support and strengthen them.
11. To this end, the partnership we are entering into with Takealot today, is another significant stepping-stone, in **our quest to translate the overarching goal of economic transformation** into reality.
12. Undoubtedly, this is a partnership that will, in my view, **add impetus to the initiatives that government has been, and continues to roll-out** regarding the development of small businesses in all the main sectors of the provincial economy.

13. Of critical importance about this partnership, is its **biasness towards the development of SMMEs in townships and rural areas**, where the majority of our people reside. Certainly, this partnership with Takealot is more than just an economic collaboration.
14. In actual fact, we view it as a **solid commitment that binds us together in our common cause of creating more opportunities for SMMEs to thrive**, and subsequently contribute meaningfully towards economic growth and job creation.
15. Ladies and gentlemen; the Takealot Group brings to the table, programmes such as ***The Last Mile Driver Development, Personal Shopper initiative; Township Franchise initiative; Stock Reseller Programme and Market Place Growth Programme.***
16. Surely, these programmes resonate well with our own policy imperatives, that are earmarked for the development of small businesses.
17. I refer to amongst others, the **SMME Development Strategy and Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment**, which enjoin government, the private sector and all relevant stakeholders not only to identify opportunities for SMMEs in key economic sectors, but also **to provide comprehensive business development support to them.**

18. This support relates, but not limited to:
- **The implementation of rural development initiatives;**
 - **Support for productive use of land;**
 - **Increasing access to markets by township entrepreneurs;**
and
 - **Building cooperative finance for the rural and township entrepreneurs.**
19. Beyond this partnership, we will also **collaborate with other strategic stakeholders or organisations**, that provide excellent suite of offerings to SMMEs' development.
20. I am talking about government's entities such as SEDA and NYDA, which have also graced this occasion today. These Entities, and many others, have been, and continue to be our key partners in this journey of developing viable and sustainable SMMEs.
21. We really **appreciate the financial and non-financial support**, they have, and continue to provide to the SMMEs in our Province, and not forgetting our public entity, MEGA, which also plays a crucial role in this area of our work. We are, indeed, grateful for their unwavering commitment.
22. Ladies and gentlemen; as I indicated, **SMMEs are the backbone of economic development and job creation**. They play a crucial role in the production of goods and services, including enhancing competition, fostering innovation, generating employment and contributing significantly to social and environmental goals.

23. Indeed, they **account for a substantial portion of employment opportunities**, particularly for individuals who might otherwise struggle to secure jobs in larger corporation.
24. So, we commit that when we allocate financial resources, we will **always be biased towards SMMEs and cooperatives**. And I doubt anyone will ever blame us for taking such a decision.
25. Programme Director; our Department exist for small businesses; that's why we have even developed an **incubation programme**. We will continue to utilise this Programme **to provide SMMEs with technical and business management skills** in the manufacturing and agro-processing space, amongst others.
26. Through the **TRADE-Decision Support Model**, a tool that we use to complement the identification and prioritisation of high-potential product-market combinations in the Province's main economic sectors, and the Takealot e-market platform, we will be in a strong position to use these combined tools as a basis for:
- **Investment promotion;**
 - **Targeting for potential market access; and**
 - **A platform for SMMEs to sell and market their products across the world.**
27. As the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, we are more than determined to work with Takealot, **in supporting township and rural businesses with a series of targeted support**

interventions, aimed at addressing the legacy of spatial exclusion faced by many small businesses.

28. Together, we will employ all relevant programmes to empower entrepreneurs in township and rural areas, **by providing them with the resources they require to succeed in the digital marketplace.**
29. Clearly, this collaboration also aligns with our **Department's Mission to "*Drive economic growth that creates decent employment and promotes sustainable development*"**.
30. Ladies and gentlemen; through the agreement with Takealot, **Parties have agreed to cooperate and collaborate in achieving the following objectives for their mutual benefit:**
 - a) **Utilise the five (5) programmes of Takealot to develop more small businesses** in the Province, through unlocking new market opportunities, improving economic infrastructure and enhancing entrepreneurial skills with specific focus on women, youth and people with disabilities in townships and rural areas;
 - b) Provide support to small businesses in **developing products** that are informed by market research of each sector, and uniqueness of the Province; and further;
 - c) Support SMME initiatives that boost local manufacturing, re-industrialisation and enhancement of the Provincial Incubation Programme.

31. Programme Director; before I retreat from the podium, as I am also responsible for Trade and Investment in the Province, I urge all the SMMEs and aspirant SMMEs present here today, **to familiarise themselves with the programmes and offerings of the Department and Takealot**, so that they would be aware of, and be able to seize all available opportunities.
32. It is, thus, my utmost pleasure to officially **declare the launch of the Takealot Township Economy Initiative**, in collaboration with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. This is, indeed, the beginning of greater things to come, for our SMMEs.
33. Let me leave you with the inspiring words of the founder of the Ford Motor Company, Henry Ford, who once said and I quote: ***“If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself”***, unquote.
34. That is why we will ***Leave No One Behind***, so that ***We can Grow the economy of Mpumalanga*** together!

Ngiyabonga / Shukran / Muito Obrigado / Asante sana/ Merci beaucoup!