

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, Ms. MC MASILELA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION OF THE BOARD OF THE MPUMALANGA ECONOMIC GROWTH AGENCY (MEGA), HELD AT THE CAPITAL HOTEL MBOMBELA, WEST ACRES, CITY OF MBOMBELA

Thursday, 05 December 2024

Programme Facilitator;

Chairperson of the Board of MEGA;

Other Board Members present;

CEO of MEGA, Mr. Isaac Mahlangu;

The Senior Management Team of MEGA and other officials present;

Ladies and gentlemen;

San'bonani!

1. Programme Facilitator; thank you very much for this opportunity, to address this all-important Strategic Planning Session of one of our Department's implementing agents, MEGA.
2. This session is so much crucial, as you have **converged to improve and even to come up with new strategies** to contribute towards economic growth and development in our Province.
3. Accordingly, the role of MEGA in growing our economy cannot be over-emphasised; it plays a crucial role in **supporting small businesses** across many sectors of the economy, as well as

affording housing funding to those frustrated by commercial banks, amongst others.

4. Programme Facilitator; the mandate given to me is very clear. I must just **steer economic growth and development activities** in the Province, so we deal decisively with the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.
5. To do so, the Premier has directed that we must **focus particularly on implementing three Strategies Priorities**; namely:
 - Inclusive economic growth and job creation;
 - Reduction of poverty and tackle high cost of living; and
 - Building a capable, ethical and developmental state.
6. As a Province, we are besieged by the high level of **youth unemployment and insufficient economic growth; delayed infrastructure development; limited support for SMMEs and black industrialists; and weak financial and resource Management.**
7. All the strategies and initiatives we come up with, should therefore **focus on addressing the said challenges**, so that we can begin to contribute towards the achievement of the three provincial strategic priorities.

8. Programme Facilitator; Let me appreciate all the presentations done thus far, which were aimed at addressing the four core problems I have just mentioned.
9. The **establishment of the envisaged Cooperatives Bank** is, thus, a good initiative which will address the red tapes created by the conventional banks.
10. The implementation of the 4IR Strategy is also key in ensuring that we compel our SMMEs to do away with the traditional way of doing business, by going digital for competitive advantage.
11. The **Mpumalanga Growth and Development Fund and the Blended Finance Scheme** are some of the bold initiatives that are commendable, and should not only end at strategy development but implementation, if MEGA needs to see itself playing a meaningful role in the economy of the Province.
12. Programme Facilitator; our Department together with MEGA, we are **participating at the National Stakeholders Engagement Forum**, organised by the Department Small Business Development (DSBD), which specifically focuses on how different Provinces are funding SMMEs and cooperatives.
13. I am delighted that *the dedt* attended one such meeting in Mahikeng in the North-West Province last week, and MEGA was also there to benchmark and learn good practice from other Provinces.

14. As MEGA, you must be in the **forefront of the implementation of the bulk-buying initiative**, in support of all the registered spaza shops. This will surely protect our children from food-borne illnesses associated with unhealthy food items sold mostly in spaza shops.
15. In this regard, I strongly believe that **MEGA is well positioned to utilise its industrial parks across the Province, to serve as storage facilities and distribution centres** to supply the registered spaza shops whilst at the same time ensuring that our people benefit from such an initiative.
16. The Department will also continue to support MEGA through better oversight frameworks and governance protocols. This will **include establishing a forum for Entity oversight**, and regularly monitoring performance to ensure accountability.
17. The Department also advocates for joint planning with its Entities, so that we can collaborate in recruiting skilled personnel, ensure project alignment, built project management units to coordinate multi-sphere projects, and plan for long-term sustainability.
18. Programme Facilitator; I also **implore the Board to ensure that all issues raised by the Auditor General are addressed**, so that MEGA can also move towards a Clean audit outcome. All recommendations from your **Audit and Risk Committees must also be implemented**.

19. The **filling of all critical vacant funded posts is also non-negotiable.**
20. The Board must also ensure that there is an **improvement in the turnaround time** in responding to Legislature Questions. Such responses **must also be shared with the Department, and in time**, so that I can be able to internalise them before our engagements with the Legislature. This will also enable me to defend them with conviction.
21. The issue of revenue collection is also crucial. **MEGA must work on enhancing its Revenue Collection Strategies so as to improve revenue collection.**
22. MEGA must also re-invest the revenue it collected **to improve and refurbish assets like industrial parks.** At our industrial parks in Kanyamazane and Kabokweni, for example, there are no functional and usable toilets, and no running water, in some cases.
23. The Board must also **ensure that no funds are returned unspent to the fiscus.** If this happens, there will be consequences.
24. The Board must also ensure that **all procurement processes are above board**, so that the Entity finally achieves a Clean audit outcome.

25. Programme Facilitator and Chairperson of the Board, having communicated some of my expectations, I wish you well and to have fruitful discussions in this Strategic Planning Session!

26. We will ***Leave No One Behind***, so that ***We can Grow Mpumalanga*** together!

Ngiyabonga!