

***ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
TOURISM, MS. MAKHOSAZANE MASILELA, MPL, DURING THE  
OCCASION OF THE 2025 MPUMALANGA GREEN MSME  
INNOVATION CHALLENGE HELD AT SASOL RECREATION CLUB,  
SECUNDA, GOVAN MBEKI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY***

***Thursday, 05 June 2025***

Programme Director, Ms. Phumeza Langa;

Our host, the Executive Mayor of Govan Mbeki Local Municipality, Cllr.  
Nhlakanipho Zuma;

Other Councillors present;

Head of Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Ms. Immy  
Serakalala;

Chairperson of the Board of Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency, Dr.  
Thembakazi Mali;

Acting CEO of Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency, Mr. Nkosinathi  
Nkonyane;

Head Shared Value Management and Policy at Sasol, Mr. Jas Govender;  
CEO of Seriti Green, Mr. Peter Venn;

All Embassies present;

Head of Just SA Project from GIZ, Ms. Christina Von Heyden;

The finalists of the Mpumalanga MSME Green Innovation Challenge;

Esteemed Entrepreneurs;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

***San'bonani!***

1. Programme Director; It is a privilege to stand before you today as Mpumalanga takes bold steps towards a greener, more sustainable future. Equally, allow me to take this opportunity to extend our profound gratitude to Sasol for hosting us here today - your continued support is highly appreciated.
2. Programme Director; 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 MSMEs to innovate, grow, and support environmental sustainability.
3. Accordingly, we have facilitated the establishment of **the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency** to drive our developmental agenda on the green economy space.
4. In relation to opportunities for MSMEs 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.
5. Programme Director; as a Department, we hold a firm view that MSME development remain the appropriate vehicle to drive the economic transformation agenda in the Province. MSMEs play a pivotal role in the alleviation of poverty, job creation and sustainable growth.

6. In this regard, the Provincial Government in partnership with the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency and all other stakeholders will bolster efforts to reduce red tape and help MSMEs leverage the Africa Free Trade Market for expanded export opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa.
7. Programme Director; our province has proactively explored **green economy opportunities** through a **cluster development model**, engaging **government, business, and academia** to drive sustainable growth.
8. 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.
9. 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 socioeconomic implications of this shift—but we must also **embrace innovation as the engine of our renewal**.
10. It is through innovative thinking, technologies, and solutions that we will repurpose our legacy infrastructure and unlock new, green pathways for inclusive growth.

11. Therefore, the 2025 Mpumalanga Green Innovation Challenge seeks 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 continue to apply pressure on our agencies, clusters, and partners to ensure these opportunities manifest in Mpumalanga.
12. We are determined to unlock the potential offered to the people of Mpumalanga through the Green Economy. We look forward to collaborating with you and your companies to provide them a home in Mpumalanga, creating jobs, investment, and fostering Green Growth for the region, the country, and the planet.
13. 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.
14. 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**.
15. At the recent **Green Enterprise Development Colloquium in Ermelo**, hosted by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism through the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency on 25 March 2025, in Ermelo, I underscored the critical role of MSME's as the **backbone of our economy**, contributing to **poverty alleviation, job creation, and long-term sustainability**.

16. Today, I am proud to reflect on the success of the **Mpumalanga Green Innovation Challenge**, which last year disbursed **180 thousand rands** in prize money to **three outstanding entrepreneurs** in our province.
17. This year's pitch challenge will also award prizes to the value of about **200 thousand rands**. The First prize winner will walk away with a whooping amount of **100 thousand rands, which is sponsored by Seriti Green**. The second and third prize winners will get **50 thousand rands and 30 thousand rands** respectively.
18. We appreciate **Seriti Green** for their contribution towards the realisation of our developmental agenda on the green economy space.
19. As I conclude, allow me to also extend our appreciation to Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa for sponsoring a special award in the waste management category. Special appreciation also goes to Nic&Nic our first place winners from last year for sponsoring **ten stunning laptop sleeves for all our finalists**.
20. As part of our effort to continue to strengthen support to small enterprises, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism has also launched a programme to provide additional financial and non-financial support to selected finalists of this competition.

21. Building on past successes, this challenge **continues to be a platform that drives innovation** in Mpumalanga's **green economy**. Entrepreneurs will pitch their **viable, scalable, and sustainable business ideas**, contributing to our collective vision for a **greener future**.
22. Together, we can build a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable green economy in Mpumalanga. Let us leverage this innovation competition to shape a prosperous future that benefits businesses, communities, and our environment.
23. I look forward to witnessing **innovative solutions** emerge from this challenge, setting a foundation for **transformative green enterprises** that will shape our province's economic future.
24. Programme Director; with those words, allow me to take this opportunity to wish all participants good luck – **and may the best innovation win**.

***Ngiyabonga!***