

***ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
TOURISM, Ms. MC MASILELA, MPL, ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
THIRD ANNUAL SATOVITO INTRA-TRADE CONFERENCE HELD AT  
ELANGENI LODGE, NKOMAZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY***

***Thursday, 21 November 2024***

Programme Director;

Executive Mayor of Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Cllr. Terror Shabangu;

Executive Mayor of the Nkomazi Local Municipality, Cllr. Phindile Magagula;

Other Councillors present;

Director General of the national Department of Tourism, Mr. Victor Tharage;

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

MTPA Board Chairperson, Mr. Victor Mashego, and other MTPA Board members present;

Acting CEO of MTPA, Mr. Justus Mohlala;

CEO of Tourism Business Council of South Africa, Mr. Tshifiwa Tshivhengwa;

National Chairperson of SATOVITO, Mr. Thulani Nzima (in absentia);

Provincial Coordinator of SATOVITO, Ms. Carol Nake, and all SATOVITO members present;

Board member of Tourism Transformation Council of South Africa, Dr Eddy Khosa;

Officials from the National and Provincial Governments, Municipalities and the MTPA present;

Local Tourism Organisations and Tourism Product Owners present;

All other delegates present at this Conference;  
Members of the media;  
Ladies and gentlemen;

***San'bonani/Good Morning!***

1. It gives me great pleasure to join you today, at this prestigious event, **the Third SATOVITO Intra-Trade Conference**. As Mpumalanga, we are privileged to be hosting you, and we can **assure you that you will receive unparalleled experience and hospitable service excellence ever**, during your stay with us.
2. When I think of our villages, towns, dorpiés and townships, I think about the unique cultures, the traditions, the experiences and the warmth of the people of Mpumalanga, *The Place of the Rising Sun*.
3. We want to ensure that world-class experience you will receive, will **make you to never stop talking good about our Province**, after you have left.
4. Programme Director; the tourism sector has had a strong recovery over the last three years, but it still has some way to go to fully reach its 2019 performance.
5. We are, however, encouraged as international tourism is making a great comeback, as per the statistics reported by Statistics SA. In the first quarter of 2024, from January to March, the international tourist arrivals in South Africa reached **90.5 percent** of 2019 levels, thus

reaching a total of **2.4 million visitors**, which represent an increase of **15.4 percent** more than quarter one of 2023.

6. Our Province has also improved significantly, during the same period, by recording just over **549-thousand** international visitors. This is an increase of **24.1 percent** in comparison with the same period in 2019.
7. This improvement paints a picture of Mpumalanga's continued attractiveness, as **the second most preferred Tourism Destination of Choice**, after the Western Cape Province.
8. I am, however, concerned about our provincial performance on the **domestic tourist arrivals, having recorded 700-thousand visitors in the first quarter of 2024**. Notably, the domestic tourism has contributed **R3.2 billion** into the economy of the Province the same period.
9. Programme Director; as we are warming up to the festive season, I would like to invite South Africans to visit Mpumalanga, and enjoy its serenity and tranquility with their families and friends.
10. Our Province has a lot to offer, as part of our domestic festive season campaigns, such as the:

- a) ***Annual Music Festivals: the Mpumalanga All-White Music Festival in Carolina; the 013 Summer Blaze Music Festival in Mbombela; the Full Moon Music Festival in Piet Retief; Mtoni***

*on Steroids in Middelburg; and the All-White Picnic at the Zithabiseni Resort.*

11. As part of our 2024 **Festive Season Marketing and Advertising campaigns**, we will implement the *iYouth Endala Summer Experience Activations, in partnership with Radio 2000; the Sunset Safari Dinner at Manyeleti Nature Reserve, in partnership with the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality; and the Woz' eMpumalanga Campaign* to be promoted on social media, using the local and national influencers.
12. We will also promote our **Regional Tourism Marketing Initiative, TRiLand**, through the Tour Operators excursion.
13. Programme Director; allow me also to congratulate SATOVITO, for choosing our Province to be the host of their **Third Intra-Trade Conference**, under the theme: **“Value Chain Development”**.
14. I am extremely excited to see what we have on offer, and look forward to engaging all of you over the next 2-days period, on **how we can take this part of the sector to greater new heights**.
15. I firmly believe that the **township and village tourism sector is a vital part of the economy** of Mpumalanga. This sector has so much to offer, with so much untapped potential.

16. The Department, that I have an honour to lead in this seventh Administration, places more focus on this area, to showcase our hidden gems and the true magic of our villages and townships.
17. To this end, I am also grateful that our Department, working with its Entity, the MTPA, has **entered into a partnership agreement with SATOVITO, through a Memorandum of Agreement** last year.
18. At the centre of the Agreement, is the consensus **to support tourism enterprises operating in the townships and tourism hubs** in the villages.
19. The partnership enjoins the MTPA and SATOVITO **to expand the tourism value chain, and collaborate on various identified areas** with the aim of facilitating and ensuring inclusive, sustainably developed and transformed tourism sector, especially in townships and rural areas.
20. The anticipation is that this will subsequently **create economic and employment opportunities** for Historically-Disadvantaged Individuals, SMMEs and local communities in the tourism sector.
21. The broad scope of our collaboration and cooperation is mainly on the following key areas:
  - a) **Availing tourism development opportunities** to empower women, youth and people with disabilities, and SMME development;

- b) Tourism product packaging, support and skills development opportunities;
- c) **Tourism market access opportunities** to increase the ability to sell villages and township product offerings.

22. Programme Director; I want to reaffirm our commitment, as Mpumalanga, to the **implementation of the Village and Township Tourism Programme.**

23. In this regard, I am pleased to report that two months ago, our Department in partnership with the NYDA, have **launched a 3-year Mpumalanga Tourism Youth Fund.** The fund offers young people in the tourism sector access to resources in order to grow and expand their businesses.

24. In addition, we have also through the MTPA, **prioritised the Product Packaging Training Programme for 15 tourism SMMEs,** which is currently being implemented.

25. I am, however, **very concerned about the slow progress in the implementation of the agreed and prioritised programmes of the Villages and Townships Tourism activities,** since the signing of the partnership agreement with SATOVITO.

26. In this regard, I request both the MTPA and SATOVITO to present an **acceleration plan, on the implementation of the following non-**

**negotiable low hanging fruits programmes to me before the end of November 2024:**

- a) ***Building capacity of Township and Village Tourism based SMMEs*** to close compliance gaps;
- b) ***Training and accreditation of youth tourist guides*** to specialise in Villages, Townships and Small Dorpies (VTDS) based tours;
- c) Commissioning of the establishment of ***Mobile Visitor Information Centres*** to promote, service and gather data by using the Gert Sibande District as a pilot programme.

27. Programme Director; during our Departmental Policy and Budget Speech in August this year, 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 2030.

28. To reach this ambitious target, we must, therefore, **flip the script and drive a clear well illuminated united path, focusing on the informal economy**. In this regard, our townships, villages and small dorpies become that path of investment and job creation, especially for rural areas.

29. Programme Director; the strategic location of the Nkomazi Local Municipality to Mozambique and the Kingdom of Eswatini **presents**

**an opportunity for visitors to experience three (3) countries in one day.**

30. It is here where the *TRiLand* Regional Marketing Initiative has its true meaning, as visitors can easily enjoy **BREAKFAST** and experience the culture and tradition of emaSwati in the Kingdom of Eswatini; have **LUNCH** in South Africa and interact with the wildlife experiences in Nkomazi and the Kruger National Park; and finally enjoy dinner and experience **NIGHT LIFE** in Mozambique.
31. Promoting township and village tourism is, thus, an integral part of diversifying our tourism offerings, so that we can grow the economy, the sector and increase the number of jobs in this sector. I have often said that we must **place more emphasis on township and village tourism**, especially through the *Sho't Left campaign*.
32. I am, thus, very pleased to see our township and villages' tourism products in their numbers, attending this SATOVITO Intra-Trade Conference.
33. This will enable them to learn more about how to grow and expand their businesses. These are often forgotten elements of our tourism sector, and as such, **I would like to commend SATOVITO and the MTPA for a job well done!**
34. Programme Director; as I retreat from the podium, let me remind our tourism product owners that **excellent customer care is significant**



**to growing their tourism businesses.** We must treat tourists as if they are kings and queens.

35. **If we treat our visitors well, they will come back for more;** if we make our visitors feel welcomed in our Province, they will surely become our tourism ambassadors, as they will share their positive experiences with others.
36. Coupled with excellent customer care, is tourism safety. We, therefore, **encourage all communities to work with law enforcement agencies, to promote tourism safety.** Let us welcome and make all our visitors feel safe within our communities, tourism sites and tourism routes. We must show them that **we care for our visitors.**
37. Lastly, we must at all times, remember that **without tourists, there's no tourism; and without tourism, there will be less jobs created.**
38. Let there be *"Tourism and Peace: 30 years of connecting people, places and culture"*.
39. ***Leave No One Behind; as we Grow Mpumalanga Together,*** through tourism!
40. I wish you success in your Conference.

***Ngiyabonga!***