

**MESSAGE OF SUPPORT, ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT,
DELIVERED BY Dr MOHAU RAMODIBE ON THE OCASSION OF THE 2024
WORLD RANGERS DAY HELD AT MANYELETI NATURE RESERVE,
BUSHBUCKRIDGE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

Friday, 02 August 2024

Programme Director, Mr. Mduduzi 'Hekzin' Vilakazi, who is the CEO of the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency;

Our leader, the MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs, uMma. Nompumelelo Hlophe;

Our host, the Executive Mayor of the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, Councillor Lydia Moroane-Zitha;

Chairperson of the Board of the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, Mr. Victor Mashego;

Executive Manager for Biodiversity Conservation at the MTPA, Ms. N Kunene;

The representative of the Field Rangers, Ms. X Lubisi;

Chairperson of Manyeleti CPA, *Tatana* H. Makhuvela;

Provincial chairperson of People and Parks, Mr. P Sambo;

Representative of the labour union, NEHAWU;

Representative of WWF-Khetha and USAID, Mr. André Wagner;

Fellow government and MTPA officials;

Our distinguished guests of the day – our Field Rangers;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Avuxeni!

1. Thank you very much for this rare opportunity afforded to me, to deliver the **Message of Support** on behalf of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, under the able stewardship of MEC

Makhosazane Masilela, assisted by the acting Head of Department, Mr. Lemmy Mdluli, and the CEOs of our public entities.

2. I promise I won't be long, as I am merely a messenger, and as such, a messenger cannot take the limelight especially when our political leadership is in midst.
3. Chairperson, as already indicated by the Chairperson of the MTPA Board, we have convened here this morning with one purpose; **to pay homage to our unsung heroes and heroines; our Field Rangers**, who selflessly continue to put their lives in danger, in protecting and conserving our fauna and flora.
4. Many of these unsung heroes and heroines lay their lives to protect and conserve our endangered species; they are all time prepared to die, for as long as our nature and endangered species are protected from extinction. This they do, for posterity; they do it for many generations to come.
5. Therefore, like being a priest, **being a Field Ranger is a calling**; our rangers do it not for the love of money, but for their love of nature.
6. To those who long to become rangers in future, please be warned that it is not a career with a lot of money, but a calling with an intention to serve our people and our Province.
7. Programme Director; as the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, we are fully behind this event. We **support and highly appreciate the momentous and selfless work being done by our courageous men and women in green, our Field Rangers**, who

continue to dedicate their lives to protect our planet's most precious natural and cultural assets and treasures.

8. We therefore pay homage and express our gratitude to our Field Rangers, who have died in the line of duty, as well as those who suffered injuries whilst protecting our biodiversity.
9. **Without biodiversity, our tourism will die**; tourists will then stop visiting our Province, and eventually our economy will suffer. **Without Field Rangers, humanity would undoubtedly face extinction.**
10. Field Rangers cannot, therefore, continue to be unsung martyrs; hence **we're here to 'sing' about the momentous work they do on a daily basis.**
11. Programme Director; as the Department, we do not have enough words to express our gratitude for the selfless work being done by Field Rangers, but from the bottom of our hearts, we say: ***Nakhensa! Siyabonga! Re a leboga! Daie Dankie! Thank you for your dedication towards conserving our fauna and flora for posterity!***
12. **You continue to be the last line of defense for wildlife**; you stand between survival and extinction of our endangered species, as you face dangerous, cruel and selfish criminals.
13. Our fauna and flora are definitely safe in your caring hands. Our tourism industry will continue to boom because of your selfless dedication. We honour and celebrate you!

14. On the same breadth, we also express our gratitude to our Public Entity, the MTPA, working with DARDLEA, for deeming it necessary to **continue to pay homage to our Field Rangers**, as the world continues to celebrate World Ranger Day which was celebrated just two (2) days back, on the 31st of July.
15. Let us ensure that this day is forever celebrated.
16. As I retreat from the podium, allow me to borrow the words of American author and motivational speaker, Tony Robbins, who once said and I quote: ***“Only those who have learned the power of sincere selfless[ness] ... experience life’s deepest joy [and] true fulfilment”***, unquote.
17. Undoubtedly, that’s what drives our Field Rangers, to look forward to another day of service to our nation.
18. ***Happy World Ranger Day!***
19. Hinkomu!