

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM,  
MR VUSI MKHATSHWA, MPL, DURING THE OCCASION OF THE PROVINCIAL  
TOURISM AWARENESS DAY HELD AT UKHAMBAMBA EVENTS CENTRE, MIDDELBURG,  
STEVE TSHWETE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

**Sunday, 26 September 2021**

Programme Director;  
Acting Executive Mayor of Nkangala District Municipality, Councillor Tiny Mthimunya;  
Executive Mayor of Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, Councillor Diphale Motsepe;  
Chairperson of the MTPA Board, Mr Victor Mashego;  
Other Board members present;  
CEO of the MTPA, Mr Johannes Nobunga;  
Government and MTPA officials present;  
Our esteemed guests – the residents of Steve Tshwete and Mpumalanga in general;  
Members of the media;  
Ladies and gentlemen;

***Good afternoon!***

1. Programme Director; I am honoured to have been invited to address this year's ***Tourism Awareness Day***, taking place in the township of Mhluzi, it is no doubt that this area has deep rich historical tapestry and contributed immensely to the struggle for liberation, I can safely say, in the firmament of history, the township of Mhluzi is part of the significant footnotes of outstanding townships which served as the theatre of struggle, and this is the heritage we need to celebrate and preserve.
2. Programme Director; this year tourism is celebrated under the theme: '***Tourism for Inclusive Growth***'. This event is one of the many other events organized by the Province, to celebrate September as the Tourism Month, which is aimed at promoting domestic tourism.
3. By promoting domestic tourism, we aim to **encourage our people to travel and explore their Province – Mpumalanga, the Place of the Rising Sun – first**, and thereafter their country at large.
4. And, we have broadened our scope in the context of the promotion of domestic tourism, by taking the tourism events of government to the people, we took a deliberate decision to boost township and rural tourism by supporting township-based tourism enterprises, because it is our understanding that they are the hit most by the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic.
5. Programme Director; it is also important to note that in our deliberate efforts to promote Mpumalanga as a tourism destination of choice, we have integrated the film industry

working together with the celebrities, social media influencers and bloggers coming from the Province, to assist us tell our story about our heritage, our ontology as the people of Mpumalanga; and our diverse culture which unite us as a people, as we continue to foster nation-building and social cohesion.

6. This event happens on the eve of the **World Tourism Day**, which will be celebrated all countries of the world tomorrow, under the banner of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), focusing on the same theme of '**Tourism for Inclusive Growth**'.
7. The UNWTO has urged that this year's **World Tourism Day** should not be about statistics, but about how tourism impacts positively in the lives of our people. In other words, as we celebrate World Tourism Day tomorrow, we must **celebrate tourism's unique ability to ensure that nobody is left behind, as the world begins to open up again, and look to the future.**
8. World Tourism Day is, thus, all about the quest to **foster awareness of tourism's social, cultural, political and economic value and the contribution**, that the sector can make towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.
9. Programme Director; the essence of our **Provincial Tourism Awareness Day**, is thus, to make our people aware that if they travel and explore their Province, their country and the world, they unconsciously contribute to economic growth.
10. The tourism sector has re-opened, and that is why we urge our people to travel and explore their serene and tranquil Province. Tourism has many social **and economic benefits to our communities, given that its** benefits are felt at every level of our broad and diverse sector, from the biggest airline to the smallest family.
11. As people travel and tour, they leave money where they transit. This, they do, through accommodation bookings, pouring petrol, eating in our restaurants, amongst other economic activities.
12. According to a report released by Statistics South Africa in April this year, the tourism sector contributed **three (3) percent to the country's GDP** (Gross Domestic Product) in 2018, which translated to **130,1 billion rand** in monetary terms. This accounts to **about 4,5 percent of the total employment** in the country.
13. And according to UNWTO, *"the business volume of tourism equals or even surpasses that of oil exports, food products or automobiles. Tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce, and represents at the same time, one of the main income sources for many developing countries"*.

14. Through tourism growth, we can **eradicate poverty and hunger**, which are, respectively, goals 1 and 2 of the **17 Sustainable Development Goals** set to be accomplished by the United Nations in 2030.
15. To this end, the UN argues that sustainable tourism development, and its impact at community level, can be linked with national poverty reduction goals; those related to promoting entrepreneurship and small businesses, and empowering less favoured groups, particularly youth and women.
16. In relation to eradicating hunger, the UN argues that tourism can spur agricultural productivity by promoting the production, use and sale of local produce in tourist destinations, and its full integration in the tourism value chain.
17. In addition, agro-tourism, which is a growing tourism segment, can complement traditional agricultural activities. The resulting rise of income in local communities can lead to a more resilient agriculture, while enhancing the value of the tourism experience.
18. Therefore, if we rally everyone to work for inclusive growth, we will surely re-ignite the tourism sector. Although it was affected by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism is one evergreen sector; it is **our Province's gold mine; the goose that lays the golden egg** for us.
19. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us, **to re-ignite and grow this sector**, so that we can build the foundations for a better future for all.
20. This is against the backdrop of the negative impact of the COVID-19 induced lockdown on the tourism sector, and our economy in general, which has created havoc as the sector is almost on its knees. Some tourism businesses have closed their doors permanently, as a result, and some people have lost their jobs.
21. We are really desperate **to re-ignite our tourism sector**, and the economy at large, so that we can create the much-needed jobs for our people.
22. We want to see all those tourism and other businesses, which succumbed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, re-opening their doors once again. We want to see all those people who lost their jobs, also getting their jobs back.
23. Programme Director; we will therefore intensify our marketing campaigns, so we can **position Destination Mpumalanga, as the tourist destination of choice**, both domestically and internationally.
24. Before I close, I would like to seize this opportunity to **urge all of you who have registered to vote, to go out in your numbers, and vote on November 1.**

Remember that it is only through voting, that you can shape and take care of your future.

25. Voting is an important democratic right that you, as citizens of this country, possess; it gives you the power to elect the people you want to represent your interests. It is a right that you cannot delegate and it enhances democracy.
26. At the same time, I urge you to **go and vaccinate** so that you can protect yourself against the deadly COVID-19. I can assure you that the vaccine is safe; I myself have already vaccinated. Please do not listen to conspiracy theories flying around. Remember that government has vaccinated you and your children for many years; and it is not different this time around.
27. Programme Director; I am aware that many of us interact on a variety of social media platforms. As you do so, please tag us on:

**#DiscoverMpumalanga**  
**#ExploreMpumalanga**  
**#WeDoTourism**  
**#MpumalangaTourism**

28. ***Let's Grow Mpumalanga Together*** through tourism revival!

I thank you!