

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM,
MR VUSI MKHATSHWA, MPL, DURING THE OCCASION OF THE NYDA'S *PITCH AND
PERFECT COMPETITION* HELD AT THE MRTT HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM
ACADEMY, CITY OF MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

Thursday, 23 September 2021

Programme Director;
Executive Mayor of Mbombela Local Municipality;
NYDA and MRTT Representatives;
Government officials present;
Our esteemed guests – the youth in tourism;
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning!

1. I am indeed humbled and honoured by the NYDA, for having requested me to address this august occasion, which is aimed at empowering the youth of our Province. As the name suggests, the **NYDA's *Pitch and Perfect Competition***, offers our youth an opportunity to pitch business ideas, which will be adjudicated by a panel of experts, and a perfect pitch selected.
2. This event, which **recognizes the Youth in Tourism**, takes place during the Tourism Month; the month dedicated to promoting domestic tourism, under the theme: '***Tourism for Inclusive Growth***'.
3. Programme director, I believe by now, we are all aware of the negative impact of the COVID-19 induced lockdown on the tourism sector, and our economy in general. It has created havoc as the sector is almost on its knees.
4. And consistent with the above, some tourism businesses have closed their doors permanently, and some people have lost their jobs. Our quest, therefore, is to revive our tourism sector and ultimately our economy.
5. To this end, we have developed the **Mpumalanga Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan**, which incorporates the **Provincial Tourism Recovery Plan**.
6. We are really desperate **to revive our tourism sector**, and the economy at large, so that we can create the much-needed jobs for our people. We really want to see all those tourism and other businesses, which succumbed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, re-opening their doors. We want to see all those people who lost their jobs, also getting their jobs back.

7. However, we have been deliberate in our responses as government in ensuring that we introduce and implement programmes aimed at responding to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the people and the economy.
8. And, through the Tourism Month, we want to **create awareness about the tourism sector's contribution to job creation and economic growth**. As Youth in Tourism, we want you to understand that **tourists create jobs**.
9. Programme director, we had to infuse some level of creativity this time around, for our tourism month to have life and garner the necessary traction, and promote the sector in the Province, with vigour and robustness through collaborative efforts with social media influencers, celebrities and bloggers.
10. As people travel and tour, they leave money where they transit. This, they do, through accommodation bookings, pouring petrol, eating in our restaurants, amongst others.
11. This is explained through the sector's contribution to the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product).
12. However, notwithstanding the above scientific articulation, as a Province, we brought in some nuances, and this is predicated on our obsession with reviving the township and rural tourism; hence we shifted focus and redirected most of our activities and imbued them with some Kasi experience through exploring Tshisanyamas and other eating outlets found in the townships and rural areas.
13. According to a report released by Statistics South Africa in April this year, the tourism sector's direct contribution to South Africa's GDP was **130, 1 billion rand in 2018**, which constitutes nearly 3 percent direct contribution to the GDP.
14. As a result, the **tourism sector contributed about 4,5 percent of the total employment** in the country. Clearly, we need to continue to nurture this sector, which we have deemed **our Province's gold mine**. Undoubtedly, it is indeed the **goose that lays the golden egg** for us.

Programme Director;

15. Through our marketing campaigns, we therefore intend to **position Destination Mpumalanga, as the tourist destination of choice**, both domestically and internationally. It is for this reason we say: **#VisitMpumalanga!**
16. We want to revive the tourism sector for **inclusive growth**. We really want our youth to benefit through meaningful participation from the sector. As you have pitched a perfect tourism business idea, be assured that it will surely be recognised and rewarded through the **Competition** you have entered.

17. The **NYDA** was primarily created to sharpen your skills and business ideas, so that you can have an opportunity to enter the mainstream economy and play a meaningful economic role.
18. As a result, the **National Youth Policy: 2020-2030** mandates the NYDA to redress the wrongs and injustices of the past and to deal decisively with the persistent, as well as new and emerging challenges facing the youth of our country.
19. The Policy recognises that **reprioritisation of resources will incorporate youth development**, taking into consideration some of the unintended consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth education, economic participation, physical and mental health.
20. Through this Policy, our caring ANC-led government, aims to **build and enhance the capabilities of young people**, so that they are responsible and contributing members of their communities and society.
21. Through the ***Pitch and Perfect Competition***, the NYDA is undoubtedly, amongst others, fulfilling its mandate to:
 - **Promote positive youth development outcomes in addressing the needs of young people and building their assets;**
 - **Support young people, particularly those outside the social, political and economic mainstream.**

Programme Director;

22. As I conclude, may I take this opportunity to **urge all of you who have registered to vote, to go out in your numbers and vote on November 1**. You, as the youth, are the future of our country and Province. The future of this Province is entirely in your hands.
23. And most importantly, take advantage of the vaccination programmes offered by government and the private sector to vaccinate and help the nation to go back to normal. **Please vaccinate to revive our tourism sector**. Let's debunk the myths perpetuated about the vaccine, and go vaccinate in your numbers as the youth. We rely on you as a stratum of society in these trying times, to spearhead the vaccination discourse.
24. Working together in these trying times, we shall overcome, and we draw inspiration from the words once opined by former President Thabo Mbeki that: ***"Gloom and despondency have never defeated adversity. Trying times need courage and resilience. Our strength as a people is not tested during the best of times"***.

25. Former President Mbeki further said that, ***“We should never become despondent because the weather is bad, nor should we turn triumphalist because the sun shines.”***
26. In closing, I take this opportunity to wish our Youth in Tourism, all of the best in the ***Pitch and Perfect Competition***. Even if your idea is not selected as a perfect pitch today, it is not the end of everything.
27. You still have an opportunity to re-shape it and make it perfect. Do not despair, for success goes to those who are willing to stand-up after a fall. May the perfect pitch win the competition.
28. ***Let’s Grow Mpumalanga Together*** through tourism revival!

#ExploreMpumalanga
#VisitMpumalanga
#DiscoverMpumalanga
#Silindzile #WeDoTourism!

I thank you!