

**SPEECH BY THE PREMIER OF MPUMALANGA AT THE
INVESTMENT AND MINING CONFERENCE HELD IN SYDNEY
CHOMA BANQUET HALL, STEVE TSHWETE LOCAL
MUNICIPALITY IN NKANGALA DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY FROM 02
TO 03 OCTOBER 2025**

Programme Director

Members of the Executive Committee,

Executive Mayors of Nkangala District Municipality: Cllr Thomas,
Ngwenya

Executive Mayor of Steve Tshwete Local Municipality: Cllr
Mhlonishwa Masilela,

Ambassadors and High Commissioners,

CEO's of Mining Companies and Business Leaders,

Director-General, Ms MM Skosana,

Heads of various Departments and Senior Officials

Ladies and gentlemen,

Esteemed guests,

Distinguished delegates,

1. Good Morning and welcome to the 1st Mpumalanga Investment and Mining Conference.
2. It is both an honour and a privilege to stand before you today at this significant **2025 Mpumalanga Investment and Mining**

Conference here in the heart of Mpumalanga mining, in Nkangala District Municipality.

3. We gather at a pivotal moment in our nation's history, one that calls for unity, innovation, and a collective resolve to take our province, and indeed our country, into a future marked by inclusive growth and prosperity.
4. We have not forgotten the call by the people, that they shall share in the Country's wealth! That the national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people; that the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole; that all other industries and trades shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people; and that all people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.
5. The **2025 Mpumalanga Investment and Mining Conference**, therefore, serve as a platform for government, business, labour, Community-based Organisations and traditional Leadership:
 - To engage and share a common vision towards crowding in investment in opportunities presented by the prioritised sectors of the provincial economy;
 - To position Mpumalanga as an investment destination of choice, and also

- To serve as a relationship-building exercise between the Mpumalanga Province and key business partners and other major stakeholders, as well as creating a unique networking opportunity and sharing of key investment trends and information at a provincial level.
6. As we embark on discussions surrounding investment and mining, under the theme ***“Driving investment for a sustainable and inclusive economy”***, we must recognise the clear importance of this conference, not only as a platform for dialogue among industry leaders, government representatives, and stakeholders but as an avenue to spur tangible economic development throughout South Africa.
 7. Here in Mpumalanga, we possess vast mineral resources, including coal, gold, platinum, and diamonds, which have the potential to drive our economy forward while creating jobs and uplifting communities.
 8. Mpumalanga is rich in coal reserves and produces about 80% of the country’s coal, and it contributes approximately 20% to the provincial GGP whilst being an important sector that provides employment to the province’s workforce.
 9. A significant percentage of the province’s coal is exported to countries such as **China, India, South Korea, and Japan**.
 10. Mpumalanga is also the home to South Africa’s major coal-fired power stations. Of the 13 coal-fired power stations that Eskom

operates, 11 are in here in Mpumalanga, which means that 70% of Eskom's supply chain is in Mpumalanga

11. With this beautiful picture I have just painted, South Africa continues to face multifaceted challenges such as high unemployment rates, increasing poverty levels, and the escalating cost of living.
12. Our conversations during this conference must help us to align the above-mentioned reality with the resources we have as a province, as we strive to realise the three key priorities set forth by the South African Government.
13. The priorities that focus on driving inclusive growth and job creation, reducing poverty and addressing the high cost of living, and building a capable state, all of which are aligned with the National Developmental Plan Vision 2030.
14. However, with 70% of the Eskom supply chain being in Mpumalanga, the province is still struggling to realise these goals, largely due to the non-adherence to social labour plans (SLAs) and corporate social investment (CSI) prescripts by various stakeholders, including businesses and government entities, amongst others.
15. Such non-compliance has obstructed the attainment of national priorities; therefore, this conference should present a roadmap for corrective measures for our province and our country.

Driving Inclusive Growth and Job Creation

16. First and foremost, we must address the urgency of driving inclusive growth and job creation.
17. The mining sector has historically been a cornerstone of our economy, and it holds the potential to play an even more significant role in the future.
18. By attracting investment into this crucial industry, we can stimulate local economies, create direct and indirect job opportunities, and foster skills development that builds a workforce capable of meeting the demands of a rapidly evolving sector.
19. To this end, I urge all stakeholders to consider how we can work together to create an environment that not only attracts investment but also ensures that our communities benefit from these economic advancements.
20. This includes supporting local suppliers, fostering partnerships with small and medium-sized enterprises, and ensuring that our mining operations adhere to sustainable and socially responsible practices.
21. Now we understand the reasons for the social labour plans, frameworks mandated by South African legislation, specifically aimed at promoting social development through the active involvement of mining and other industries in the communities where they operate.

22. The aim of these plans is to address issues such as **unemployment, skills development, and local economic empowerment.**
23. Our Government believe that, through Corporate Social Investment, businesses will make voluntary contributions to support **social, economic, and environmental development** in local communities.
24. While both the SLA and CSI frameworks are designed to **enhance community well-being**, the failure to adhere to their guidelines has led to **detrimental consequences** in Mpumalanga. Thus, the a high unemployment rate and poverty rate.
25. The non-compliance with social labour plans and corporate social investment can be observed through various lenses, including **economic stagnation, increased poverty levels, and growing social inequality** within Mpumalanga.

- *Economic Stagnation*

- One of the most significant ramifications of disregarding social labour plans is economic stagnation.
- In Mpumalanga, a province rich in natural resources, particularly coal, companies often focus solely on profit maximisation rather than community engagement.
- Consequently, the local population remains largely unempowered, leading to a lack of job creation.

- For instance, statistics from the Department of Labour indicate that unemployment rates in Mpumalanga have remained alarmingly high, hovering around 35%.
- Such figures starkly contrast the national goal of promoting job creation and sustainable economic growth.
- *Increased Poverty Levels*
 - The neglect of corporate social investment initiatives has exacerbated poverty levels in Mpumalanga.
 - Instead of investing in community development and support services, many corporations have been reluctant to part with their resources.
 - As a result, communities, particularly in rural areas, have little access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure.
 - The lack of investment has generated an environment where poverty thrives, limiting the province's ability to meet the government's goal of poverty eradication.
 - According to a report from Statistics South Africa, Mpumalanga has one of the highest poverty rates in the country, with approximately 53% of its population living below the poverty line.
- *Growing Social Inequality*

- The non-implementation of social labour plans and corporate social investment has also facilitated a widening gap between the rich and the poor.
- As corporations prioritise their financial returns, the benefits of economic growth are often unequally distributed.
- This situation perpetuates social inequality, which contradicts the government's priority of enhancing social justice.
- For example, while major mining companies in Mpumalanga flourish, many residents still lack access to basic amenities and opportunities for upward mobility.
- This imbalance undermines the social fabric of communities and creates potential for unrest and dissatisfaction among marginalised groups.

26. We must champion those initiatives that support the development of our youth, empower women, and provide opportunities for historically marginalised communities, including people with disabilities.

Reducing Poverty and Tackling the High Cost of Living

27. The second critical priority is the relentless pursuit of reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living.

28. The economic benefits generated from the mining sector should be reflective of our collective ability to uplift those who have been left behind.

29. Mining companies must embrace their social responsibility to invest in community development initiatives, be it through education, healthcare, or infrastructure improvements, that can alleviate the burden of poverty.
30. Furthermore, we, as government leaders, must ensure that the regulatory frameworks and policies in place support a shared growth model that prioritises community well-being.
31. By working closely with communities to address their needs and aspirations, we can pave the way for more equitable distribution of wealth generated through mining activities.
32. It is imperative that we listen to the voices of the people and engage them in co-creating solutions that improve their livelihoods.

Building a Capable State

33. Lastly, we must focus on building a capable state, one that is equipped to respond to the challenges and opportunities we face as a nation.
34. This entails enhancing our institutional capacities, ensuring transparency and accountability in governance, and fostering an environment that values innovation and efficiency.
35. In collaboration with the private sector, we can create synergies that will enable us to develop best practices in mining operations, enhance safety protocols, and promote environmentally sustainable practices.

36. Together, we can build a state that not only regulates the mining sector effectively but also facilitates the growth and expansion of businesses in a manner that is beneficial to all South Africans.
37. As we pursue the goals outlined in the National Developmental Plan Vision 2030, we must remain united in our efforts.
38. The challenges before us are significant, but they are not insurmountable.
39. If we prioritise collaboration, innovation, and sustainable practices, we will position our province and our nation for success.
40. Further, Ladies and Gentlemen, we need to pave a pathway for rectifying these shortcomings in Mpumalanga, namely:

(i) Strengthening Regulatory Frameworks

- As a government, we need to play our role and enhance the regulatory frameworks surrounding social labour plans and corporate social investment to ensure strict adherence by businesses.
- This could include implementing robust monitoring and evaluation systems that hold corporations accountable for their commitments.
- For example, the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy could work alongside local government entities to conduct regular audits of mining companies' social labour plans, ensuring that they meet the necessary criteria and effectively address community needs.

(ii) *Encouraging Public-Private Partnerships*

- Public-private partnerships (PPPs) could be a strategic approach to bridge the gap between corporate interests and community development in Mpumalanga.
- By fostering collaboration between local governments and businesses, resources can be pooled to address socioeconomic challenges effectively.
- For instance, logistics companies operating in Mpumalanga could collaborate with local municipalities to improve transportation infrastructure, creating jobs while enhancing accessibility to markets for local producers.

(iii) *Promoting Community Engagement and Empowerment*

- Companies must prioritise community engagement to foster trust and mutual benefit.
- By involving local stakeholders in decision-making processes regarding social investment projects, businesses can better address community desires and needs.
- An example of this could be through stakeholder forums that facilitate discussions between corporations and community leaders, enabling joint decision-making about investment initiatives.
- Such engagement not only empowers communities but also aligns corporate objectives with local development goals.

(iv) *Enhancing Educational Opportunities*

- Investing in education and skills training is essential for breaking the cycle of poverty in Mpumalanga.

- Corporations can allocate a portion of their CSI budgets to establish vocational training centres in collaboration with local educational institutions.
 - For instance, a partnership with a local college to create programs tailored to mining and engineering skills could produce a more competent workforce, leading to higher employment rates and economic stability.
 - Currently, we have defunct institutions like the Elijah Mango College of Higher Education in Ehlanzeni, Marapyane College in Nkangala, that can be repurposed for this initiative.
41. In conclusion, I encourage all of you to engage in fruitful discussions over the course of this conference. We need to address issues of non-compliance with social labour plans and corporate social investment by making a concerted effort to involve various stakeholders.
42. Let us harness the collective knowledge, expertise, and passion that reside within this venue to create a mining sector that not only thrives economically but also serves as a catalyst for social change and development.
43. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to the outcomes of our discussions here today.
44. Together, we can forge a brighter, more inclusive future for Mpumalanga, The Place of the Rising Sun and for all of South Africa.

45. I am looking forward to our deliberations and the Investment pledges that will be announced.

46. Let me also thank all of you for making the 1st Mpumalanga Investment and Mining Conference to be possible.

Thank you.