

POLITICAL OVERVIEW BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MS MC MASILELA, MPL, DURING AN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 27 May 2025

Honourable Chairperson;

Honourable Members of the Portfolio Committee;

Sanibonani

1. Chairperson, thank you very much for affording us this opportunity, to once more engage with the Portfolio Committee, as we deliberate on the **2024-2025 Fourth Quarter Performance Report of the Department and its three (3) Public Entities**.
2. Your consistent and persistent oversight makes us not to rest on our laurels nor slumber, as we know that **we will be held accountable for failure** to deliver services to our people.
3. As a norm, I am accompanied by the captain of *the dedt family*, Ms. Immy Serakalala, in her capacity as the Head of the Department, supported by the Chairpersons of Boards and CEOs of our Public Entities, who are also accompanied by their respective senior management teams.
4. And after I have provided my Political Overview, **the HOD as well as the CEOs, will then provide details of our Responses** to the Questions raised by the Portfolio Committee.

5. Chairperson, we are meeting here today few days after a historic event that took place at the Oval Office in the United State of America, where it became very clear on an international stage that the intention is to portray South Africa as a lawless country. This event is preceded by months of negative stories about South Africa by the President of the United State of America.
6. Surely, some of the utterances that were made before and during that media briefing at the White House should concern all of us and will undoubtedly have a ripple effect on tourism and investor confidence in South Africa.
7. Now, you will agree with me when I assert that all of us gathered here, we have an added responsibility through our actions to debunk the unfortunate narrative that seeks to peddle a narrative that South Africa is a lawless country.
8. Again, we are appearing before this committee following the recent release of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey by Statistics South Africa. Regrettable, the report reveals that Mpumalanga has lost **43 thousand jobs in the first quarter**.
9. Therefore, in order to improve the situation, the Mpumalanga Provincial Government will continue to implement catalytic economic projects so as to stimulate the economy and create the much-needed jobs for our people.
10. Industries to be targeted due to their high potential for job creation include agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, in the form of rolling-out the Mpumalanga Industrial Development Plan, construction of infrastructure project and the trade industry, with regards to tourism, MSMEs, including the informal sector and finance.

11. Tourism is a growing sector in our province, in 2024 Mpumalanga was rated the second largest province in terms of international tourist arrivals accounting for 23.8% share of international tourist arrivals to South Africa. The province received 2.1 million international tourist arrivals, which represents an increase of 15.6% compared to 2023. However, we are not doing so well in terms of domestic arrivals in that the province generated only 3.2 million domestic trips. The province will be implementing strategies to improve domestic trips; these include advertising on national radio stations and other media platforms.
12. Furthermore, Chairperson, to market Mpumalanga as a Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events (MICE) destination, the MTPA supported Metro FM activations. The Department collaborated with DCSR to participate in the tourism activations for the Metro FM awards which creates economic spin-offs for the province, given that local businesses, including MSMEs, benefit from the procurement of goods and services, such as accommodation, food, filling stations and many others. The events contribute significantly towards increasing tourist traffic and driving economic development for the province.
13. Honorable Chairperson, once more, the Department, through its Agency, MTPA has recently participated at Africa Travel Indaba in Durban to market Mpumalanga as a Tourist Destination of Choice. Africa's Travel Indaba is one of the leading business-to-business exhibitions for both inbound and outbound travel and tourism markets. It presents a great opportunity to profile and market the destination to both local and international markets. The event creates a great opportunity for Mpumalanga products to market themselves to international buyers and for tourism MSMEs to showcase their products.

14. The MTPA participated alongside the three district municipalities, who were also afforded an opportunity to recruit tourism MSMEs from their respective districts to participate. MTPA and the district municipalities supported **thirty (30) MSMEs to exhibit at the show**. The Department of Tourism supported **six (6) MSMEs from the province to exhibit under their pavilion, while KLCBT also supported eighteen (18) tourism business to attend**. As such, the total number of tourism businesses from the province participated were 54.
15. As part of Africa's travel indaba programme, the MTPA concluded memorandums of understating with sister agencies to cooperate in developing and marketing tourism, these includes the Limpopo Tourism Agency, South African National Parks, and the Nkangala Economic Development Agency, an entity of the Nkangala District Municipality.
16. Chairperson, the Department has recently hosted **two (02) successful enterprise development seminars and exhibitions for MSMEs and cooperatives in the Thaba Chweu and Bushbuckridge Local Municipalities**.
17. I must indicate that the seminars and exhibitions are yet another clearest indication of our commitment to strengthen support to MSMEs and Cooperatives, and to even foster partnerships with the private sector so that a huge impact is made in the growth of these businesses.
18. Our focus and priority is the implementation of socio-economic interventions aimed at intent and resolve to maximise job creation, eradicate poverty and reduce inequality. We have also committed to work with the private sector and our social partners to create jobs for our people and support small enterprise development.

19. Chairperson, during our last appearance to the Committee, I expressed my frustration, regarding the **delay in finalising the township registration for the much-anticipated Petro-Chemical Industrial Technology Park** in Secunda, in the Govan Mbeki Local Municipality.
20. Section 53 of the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act requires us to **seek approval of the Minister of Mineral and Petroleum Resources**, before such a township can be established.
21. I am happy to inform this committee that the Department has obtained the required Section 53 Certificate from the **Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources on the 18th of March 2025**. The project is now ready to move to conveyancing to establish the Township Register, which will finalise the planning phase of the project.
22. Chairperson, there is considerable progress which we report, as building blocks towards realising the much-anticipated Mpumalanga Nkomazi SEZ. Accordingly, the filling of critical posts in the Nkomazi SEZ organogram is already underway.
23. In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Committee that the Board has appointed the **Chief Executive Officer and the Chief financial Officer**. The Department is pleased with the appointments and we are confident that they propel the state enterprise to deliver the many exciting economic development projects and initiatives that it plans to achieve.
24. Chairperson, our Public Entities also continue to carry-out their delegated functions effectively. The MER continues to diligently **regulate the gambling and liquor industries** as mandated. MEGA continues to **provide support to SMMEs**, amongst others, while MTPA continues to **protect our flora and fauna, including marketing our Province as a tourist destination of choice**.

25. I do not want to take much of your time, so that more time should be dedicated to our engagement with the Committee. Accordingly, our CEOs will provide details of the work of their respective Entities, when they present their respective responses to the questions raised by the Committee.

26. Chairperson, these are **some of the many high-level achievements and issues**, which the HOD will provide granular details of, after I have concluded my talk.

27. Once more, thank you very much for indulgence, and please allow me to retreat so that the HOD and the CEOs of our Public Entities can provide details.

28. Once more, thank you very much for your indulgence.

29. *We will **Leave No One Behind**, as we **Grow Mpumalanga** together!*

Ngiyabonga!