

REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF THE PREMIER OF MPUMALANGA, MR D.D MABUZA BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL DURING THE PREMIER'S DIALOGUE AND EXPO FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS AT INGWENYAMA LODGE, WHITE RIVER, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Friday, 12 November 2009

Programme Facilitators, Dr Joyce Pakade and Mr Peter Shube;
Honourable Premier, Mr David Mabuza;

Executive Mayor of the Mbombela Local Municipality, His Worship Councillor Lassy Chiwayo;

Acting Director General of the Province, Mr Mighty Mgidi;

Representatives of SAWEN (South African Women Entrepreneurs Network), SEDA, IDC, and MEGA;

Government officials present;

Members of the media;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Morning!

Borrowing from the words of the Honourable Premier when he addressed the Provincial Legislature on the occasion of delivering the State of the Province Address in June this year, and I quote:

“The development of small and medium enterprises contributes significantly to the share of employment creation. As a province, we will leverage government procurement to support the growth and sustainability of SMMEs, including the advancement of broad based black economic empowerment objectives.

Alongside these initiatives, we will ensure that we expand programmes to enable young people, women, and persons with disabilities to participate meaningfully in the mainstream economy”.

It is against that commitment, that we are meeting here this morning, to continue in our quest to fulfil the promise made by the Premier. This session, is therefore aimed at creating a dialogue between those women who have already made it in the male-dominated business world, and those who are aspiring to become entrepreneurs of note. It is our mandate as government and the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, to ensure that every South African benefit from the wealth of this country. It is a commitment that we made when we adopted the *Freedom Charter* in 1955, that *“the People, (irrespective of their gender), shall share in the Country's wealth!”* We will therefore, make everything possible, to ensure that we pave the way for the involvement of women in business.

The objectives of this dialogue are to amongst others:

- Create a platform of engagement between government and women in business and those aspiring, on business and economic opportunities and support mechanisms and systems created to empower women;
- Create a platform for women to identify challenges and frustrations they encounter in pursuance of business or economic aspirations;
- Create a platform for women, both affluent and emerging to share experiences and learn from one another regarding entrepreneurship;

- Promote and enhance business networks, give support to women by linking them with institutions that will assist them to access funding and business development support services.

We hope that through the dialogue, a lot more women who have been aspiring to become entrepreneurs will benefit in many respects. Through the implementation of both the Provincial SMME and Co-operative strategies in the current financial year, we commit to ensure that women equally benefit from our intervention as government. We will also mobilise support from all stakeholders on the establishment of the Provincial SMME and Co-operative Support Agency, which is aimed at ensuring that SMMEs have access to financial support from the financial institutions.

As we plan to dispose the Tekwane Citrus farm in this district, the Loopspruit Winery and Moloto Roses farms both in the Nkangala District to deserving and qualifying Agri-BEE potential beneficiaries, we commit that women, the youth and people with disabilities will be seriously considered above the rest. This is because women continue to play pivotal roles in nurturing families, and that in most cases, everything they touch turns into gold.

As I close, *“never say the sky is the limit, when there are footprints on the moon.”*

Working together, we can do more *“to Empower Women for Development and Gender Equality”* by ensuring that they *“participate meaningfully in the mainstream economy.”*

As the Chinese puts it, and I quote: **“All cats love fish, but fear to wet their paws,”** meaning that, all people love to make money, but very few people pursue entrepreneurship because it’s full of challenges and uncomfortable risks. I hope there is none like that amongst us.

Having said that, I am humbled and honoured to introduce the servant of his people; the man who is always prepared to bet with his life, for as long as his people are not benefiting from the wealth of this country. He is a dedicated cadre of our movement; the Provincial Chairperson of the African National Congress, the Honourable Premier of Mpumalanga, Mr D.D Mabuza. May I request the Premier to come and deliver the keynote address. Honourable Premier!

I thank you!