

**MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL,
DURING AN OCASSION OF MY ACRE OF AFRICA TRUST AT THE KRUGER
NATIONAL PARK, EHLANZENI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY.**

Sunday, 16 May 2010

Programme Director;

Chairperson of My Acre of Africa Trust, Mr Mashudu Ramano and other trustees;

CEO of My Acre of Africa Trust, Ms Busi Mkhize;

A representative of Total South Africa, Mr Craig Lourens;

Distinguished guests;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Evening!

I am humbled and honoured to have been invited and afforded an opportunity to address this significant gathering; a gathering organised by an organisation which has the same vision as our mandate. I am humbled because the objectives for the creation of *My Acre of Africa Trust*, links perfectly with our mandate, as the Department responsible for tourism and preservation of our environment. We appreciate your continuing contribution and efforts towards conserving our environment for future generations, lest if we fail to do so, those who come after us will pay the price due to our carelessness.

I am confident that none of you present here this evening, would like to be counted amongst those who failed the future generations by having contributed to the degradation of our environment.

I believe **working together, we can do more** to save our environment for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

Ladies and gentlemen, when we adopted the country's Constitution in 1996, we, through the Bill of Rights, committed to ensure that *“Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations.”*

We salute former President Nelson Mandela, the Patron Emeritus of *My Acre of Africa Trust*, for his selfless efforts towards conservation, and his call to all nations of the world to start taking conservation very serious. We applaud that this initiative is not only focusing here at home, but also targeting all nations of the world to start acting now, given the environmental de-gradation challenges and the reality of climate change. We continue to experience serious challenges around waste and pollution management, which if unattended, will have devastating consequences to the detriment of future generations.

The advent of development has, and still continues to contribute to severe deforestation, air pollution and waste problems. One such major contributor to air pollution is pollutants from fossil fuel which continues to increase the level of greenhouse gas emissions at an alarming rate. According to the leading economic forecaster, Global Insight, the number of vehicles on global roads has reached one billion, with predictions that it could reach 3 billion by 2035. The reality of all these, is the advent of global warming due to climate change being experienced by countries, the world over. Temperatures and sea levels are rising; diseases are becoming rampant and weather patterns unpredictable.

We cannot therefore, afford to continue to play blind-mice to these devastating challenges, if we want to be counted as caring people of South Africa and the world. Our Constitution mandates us to *“prevent pollution and ecological degradation; promote conservation; and to secure ecologically sustainable development and the use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.”*

As government, we have long started to implement strategies aimed at reducing the level of greenhouse gas emissions. Efforts to encourage the use of renewal or green energy are in full swing; and government will soon approve the **National Green Economy Strategy**, which seeks to combat the negative effects of climate change by focusing on the possible creation of green job opportunities across many sectors of the economy.

We applaud your commitment towards funding a number of conservation projects within South Africa and the SADEC region, such as environmental learning programmes; biodiversity preservation; anti-poaching programmes; community-based conservation projects and degraded eco-systems, amongst others. Through your environmental learning programmes, our people, more especially our children, will understand the importance of nature conservation. Your intervention in bio-diversity preservation will significantly contribute towards assisting us to fulfil our mandate of ensuring the protection of protected areas and endangered species. Since poaching is a big threat to our natural heritage, we highly appreciate your commitment towards ensuring anti-poaching.

Ladies and gentlemen, in 25 days from now, our country will host world nations during the 2010 FIFA World Cup games. This is a life-time moment that we've all been patiently waiting for, given that it will also afford us an opportunity to showcase our tourism offerings, including this park, which is a renowned world-class eco-tourism and bio-diversity destination in Africa.

However we continue to experience the challenge of service excellence in our hospitality industry. Our front-line staff remains critical, as they are the Ambassadors of the industry. Their attitude can make or break us, hence as a province, we are currently conducting Service Excellence training for over 12 000 front-line staff across the province.

Our intension is to build an excellent cadre of frontline staff, who will assist us to boost our tourism industry. If we give our visitors an excellent service, they are likely to come back for more, since we would have permanently engraved ourselves in their minds. Nonetheless, despite the pessimism of the prophets of doom who had never had confidence in a developing African country like ours, to organise and host the biggest sporting game in the world, we have proved to be ready. We are ready and patiently waiting to welcome the world to our country.

Ke Nako ya Afrika! – Africa’s time has come to showcase its humanity.

As I close, may I take this opportunity to convey our sincerest appreciation to all those workers, who toiled in the scorching sun and the torrential rains, to prove the prophets of doom wrong, by delivering the infrastructure for the world cup in time. Their sweat has built an eternal legacy for our children and future generations. We, and future generations, will eternally cherish their contribution.

Once more, we salute the patron, trustees and the leadership of *My Acre of Africa Trust* and the South African National Parks for their pioneering vision *“to inspire people the world-over, to make wildlife, wild lands and sustainability our legacy.”* We pay tribute to Madiba, who continues to inspire us to become conservation and environmental management pioneers.

Ladies and gentlemen, our environment is a God-given treasure – It is irreplaceable. Indeed once it becomes extinct, it will be lost forever, and our children and future generations will be immeasurably poorer. And when that happens, we would have dismally failed South Africa and our province. I fully support this course, and if you have not bought a brick already, I implore you to do so immediately. Put your name on a ‘brick’ and help to conserve our rich natural heritage today, for tomorrow. I pledge to do so myself!

In the words of American engineer and inventor of the electric starter, Charles F. Kettering, *“My interest is in the future, because I am going to spend the rest of my life there.”*

Working together, we can do more *“to make wildlife, wild lands and sustainability our legacy.”*

I thank you!