

INPUT BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL DURING THE PROVINCIAL ECONOMIC SUMMIT AT EMNOTWENI ARENA, NELSPRUIT, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Thursday, 15 October 2009

Programme Director and Acting Director General of the Province, Mr J.S Mgidi;
Honourable Premier of Mpumalanga, Mr David Mabuza;
Executive Mayor of the host District, Her Worship Councillor Khosi Mkhonto;
Honourable Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Ms Bongzi Ntuli;
Honourable Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature, Mr Jackson Mthembu;
Representative of the Mozambiquean Government to South Africa, Consular Verissimo;
Honourable MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Administration, Mr Meshack Malinga;
Honourable MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport, Dr Clifford Mkasi;
Honourable MEC for Finance, Mrs Pinky Phosa;
Honourable MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Norman Mokoena;
Honourable MEC for Health and Social Development, Ms Dikeledi Mahlangu;
Honourable MEC for Human Settlement, Mr Madala Masuku;
Honourable MEC for Education, Ms Regina Mhaule;
Honourable MEC for Culture, Sport and Recreation, Mr Vusi Shongwe;
Honourable MEC for Community Safety, Security and Liaison, Ms Sibongile Manana;
Executive Mayors of Municipalities present;
Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, *Inkosi* Mahlangu;
Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature;
Members of Mayoral Committees responsible for Economic Development;
All Councillors in our midst;

Chairpersons, Board Members and CEOs of our Public Entities;
Heads of Departments present;
Municipal Managers;
Government officials from all spheres;
Representatives of the civil society; organised labour; organised business;
Distinguished guests;
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen;

I would like to start by quoting two Chinese proverbs which state that, *“When planning for a year, plant corn. When planning for a decade, plant trees. When planning for life, train and educate people.”* The second one says, *“If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed.”*

Honourable Premier; ladies and gentlemen, I have deemed it relevant to refer to the two proverbs, specifically because they summarise the reasons why we are gathered here this morning. They sum up our zealous commitment, collectively, **to work together** to plan for life. Planning for life implies that we must plan to re-train and educate those who have unfortunately fallen prey to the economic recession, by losing their jobs. Our commitment is to facilitate and ensure **the creation of decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods**. We have further realised that, like the Chinese proverb warns, *“If we do not change our direction (now), we are likely to end up where we are headed.”*

We have committed as the ruling African National Congress, that we will ensure the realisation of five priority areas within the next five (5) years of our electoral mandate. We could not therefore, fold our arms, and believe that things will turn out for the better, despite the obvious signs. **Working together, we can do more** to protect jobs and create opportunities for individuals and communities through a diversified, growing, competitive and inclusive regional economy.

Ladies and gentlemen; distinguished guests, as you may recall, when delivering the State of the Province Address in June Premier Mabuza instructed us to, and I quote:

“We have to stop paying lip service to the principle of partnership and begin to walk the talk.... Either we work together or we choose to perish in our separate silos. To encourage dialogue and forging a common growth path, government will, convene a Provincial Economic Summit to craft better mechanisms to respond to the recession.”

I am therefore honoured and humbled this morning, to outline the purpose and expected outcomes from this two-day economic summit. In line with the instruction of the Premier, the summit will seek:

- To establish and align provincial economic interventions with the national **“Framework for South Africa’s Response to the International Economic Crisis”** as adopted at *Nedlac*, but taking into account the unique features of the province and challenges it faces;
- To defend jobs and create an environment for the generation of many more decent work opportunities in the province;
- To respond to the specific needs of the most affected sectors and individuals such as the youth, women and people with disabilities.

The summit is further intended to lay a platform for a better performing economy that will support a better life for the people of the province, in line with Millennium Development Goals and objectives of Vision 2014, that is, halving poverty and unemployment by 2014.

Honourable Premier, our commitment towards ensuring that we convene this summit remained unwavering. We worked tirelessly behind the scene consulting different social partners. Multi-Stakeholder Preparatory Task Teams were formed to engage in dialogue with the aim of forging a common growth path. Four (4) task teams focusing on **employment; finance and investment; social interventions; and distressed sectors** were formed to propose areas of intervention to mitigate the effects of the recession, and further map the road ahead in terms of economic growth in the province. We have at the same time, met with big businesses such as Sappi; Columbus Steel; Xtrata; Eskom; Sasol; York Timber, amongst others, to discuss the role they could play.

We are delighted to report that every concerned stakeholder came to the party, and contributed meaningfully. Organised labour unions such as Cosatu, Fedusa and Nactu formed part of the four task teams, which included organised business in the form of Nafcoc, Fabcos, die Afrikaanse Handel Institeit, SACCI, Agri-Mpumalanga and the Chamber of Mines. We also consulted National and even Public Entities such as the DBSA, SEDA, IDC, MEGA, MADC, MHFC.

We expect that at the end of the summit, all interested stakeholders, will collectively agree on **a set of priority initiatives that will be implemented by the social partners in the short, medium and longer term, intended to create jobs, promote investment, accelerate service delivery and build social partnership.** We hope that all stakeholders will commit to an effective and collective provincial response to the economic recession and global economic downturn. We thus take this opportunity to pass our sincere appreciation, to all of you who took interest in the future of your province, and of generations to come.

It is indeed, our responsibility collectively, to ensure that we re-ignite our already battered economy for the benefit of our people - more significantly, for those who cannot fend for themselves. As President Jacob Zuma said, we are their only hope, and we dare not fail them.

In closing Honourable Premier, ladies and gentlemen, like another Chinese saying goes, *“When we have nothing to worry about, (it implies) we are not doing much; and not doing much, may supply us with plenty of future worries.”* As we collectively worry today about the future ahead, we may not have things to worry about in the future. When that happens, we would be able to go to bed with pride knowing that we are the pillar of strength for our people. And when we are recalled by the creator, we will go to our graves with no regrets; knowing that no child of Mpumalanga goes to bed on an empty stomach.

Working together, we can do more to protect jobs and create opportunities for individuals and communities through a diversified, growing, competitive and inclusive regional economy.

I thank you!