

SPEECH DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL BY HEAD OF DEPARTMENT, MR MANDLA MAZIBUKO DURING A SEDA SMALL BUSINESS SEMINAR AT KAMHLUSHWA, NKOMAZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Friday, 25 September 2009

Programme Director, Mr Sam Sithole;

Executive Mayor of Nkomazi Local Municipality, his Worship Councillor M.J Mavuso;

Provincial Manager of SEDA Mpumalanga, Ms Ntokozo Majola;

Representatives of GCIS; MEGA; SARS; TSB; Umsombovu; Department of Social Development; Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Administration; Construction SETA;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good Morning!

I am humbled and honoured this morning, to deliver a message of support and motivation, on behalf of the MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Mr J.L Mahlangu, who unfortunately could not make it due to unforeseen circumstances. He sends his most sincere apology for not being able to make it.

Programme Director, his Worship the Mayor, when delivering his maiden State of the Province Address in June this year, Premier David Mabuza said and I quote:

“The development of small and medium enterprises contributes significantly to the share of employment creation.

As a province, we will (therefore) 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."

This therefore, is one of our marching orders as the Department, which is mandated to facilitate economic growth in the province – and we dare not fail in our mission to ensure that the people shall share in the wealth of the country. Given the negative impact on our economy due to the current recession, it is our responsibility together, to ensure that we **create sustainable jobs and livelihoods** for our people.

We commit therefore as a Department, that we will during the current financial year focus on implementing both the Provincial SMME and Co-operative strategies and further endeavour to mobilise support from stakeholders on the establishment of the Provincial SMME and Co-operative Support Agency. The aim is to ensure that SMMEs have access to financial support from financial institutions. It is also our intention to facilitate the establishment of 30 new co-operatives and further support 25 existing ones. We will also through our public entity, MEGA, fund up to 91 SMMEs in order to enhance BEE and women empowerment thereby delivering on our mandate in this regard. The launch of the SMME Survival Toolkit will also see a further 140 SMMEs being capacitated to be self sustainable.

Our intensions are clear and honest, that is, we will ensure empowerment of SMMEs in order to create decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods for our people. This will in turn, contribute towards propelling our ailing economy.

I am therefore pleased that different agents of government are working together to realise this mandate. It is through these empowerment seminars, that our people will be enlightened and know where to knock for assistance. As government we strongly believe that working together, **we can do more to build sustainable enterprises through linkages and partnerships.**

Programme Director, Ladies and gentlemen, in order to ensure easy access to government services to prospective entrepreneurs, we have signed several service level agreements with Cipro to decentralise its services to municipalities. I happy to announce that all Cipro services will now be offered at all district municipalities. We have further entered into a service level agreement with Blue Action Trading, to facilitate the business plan launch pad around the province. The business plan launch pad competition aims to create opportunities for anyone with a business idea or existing business, and who finds it difficult to secure a conventional commercial funding.

The competition was run across the province and closed at the end of August 2009. We will announce the winners during the provincial awards scheduled for 7 - 8 October 2009. The winners, to be selected based on their business plan viability and suitability for funding criteria, will then be funded through Mega which has committed to spend up to R5 million to fund the winners.

If we empower and facilitate SMMEs development, we will in turn contribute towards reducing our unemployment rate which is currently standing at 26.5 per cent and thus reduce dependence on government. This will free some government funding which could be used to fund the construction of the much needed school and health infrastructure. As the Premier instructed, we will as the Department continue to focus on accelerating economic growth and transforming the economy in order to mitigate against the negative effects of the recession on especially the poor and most vulnerable members within our communities.

As I conclude, let me take this opportunity to wish you a very fruitful and successful seminar. Our intension is to show you how to fish, and not to catch fish for you. Take the information that will be imparted to you today and use it for your own benefit and the benefit of your community.

One of the liberation icons for humankind, Mahatma Gandhi once said, and I quote:

“Every worthwhile accomplishment, big or little, has its stages of drudgery and triumph; a beginning, a struggle and a victory.”

Never always expect smooth sailing towards success. It calls for commitment and unwavering discipline to realise one’s dream. The power is in your hands to realise that dream.

Vuk u’Zenzele!

Working together, we can do more!

Ngiyabonga!