

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE CHIEF DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, DR J PHAKADE, DURING NKANGALA WOMEN IN BUSINESS SEMINAR, EMALAHLENI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.**

**Tuesday, 09 February 2010**

Programme Director,

Executive Mayor of Emalahleni Local Municipality, Councillor L Malatjie;

Speaker of Nkangala District Municipality, Councillor GT Mthimunye;

Chief Executive Officer of SEDA, Ms Hlonela Lupuwana;

Representatives from various Business Sectors;

Government officials present;

Members of the media;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

*Good Morning!*

Programme Director, may I start by submitting the MEC's apology, for not being able to join us here this morning. He would have liked to join you, but due to other pressing government commitments he is unable to. However he sends his best wishes for the success of the seminar.

Ladies and gentlemen, just last week when MEC Mahlangu was handing over stalls to hawkers in Pilgrims' Rest, the World Heritage Site in our Province, he quoted a Chinese proverb which says:

*"Give a (wo)man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a (wo)man to fish, and you feed h(er) for a lifetime!"*

Indeed, nothing cannot be more true than what is implied by the proverb. We are gathered here this morning, to teach women how to fish – providing them with lifetime knowledge that will assist them to become entrepreneurs of note tomorrow. We are therefore humbled as the Department responsible for economic development in the province, to have been invited to come and shape the way to a better tomorrow. We appreciate SEDA for having partnered with us. This really shows our common commitment to empower the women folk. Indeed **“working together, we can do more to ensure that women claim a share of our economic benefits.”**

Programme, allow me to start by sharing with the house the challenges that we women, are faced with:

- A large section of women continue to be sidelined from the main stream of our economy;
- Very few women have risen to the top as leaders and Managers of Private and Public business companies;
- A number of women are confronted with many challenges with regards to access to information and knowledge of the business world; access to finance; access to markets; and empowerment of business management skills.

In addressing these challenges, our department has signed several service level agreements with *Cipro* to de-centralise its services around our province. This will, in the near future, be extended to our district municipalities. We are also rolling out a programme on co-operatives through seminars in the Province. It is therefore important to us as women, that we participate fully in co-operatives so that we could provide services to Government and the Private Sector. This will ensure the absorption of more women in the mainstream economy.

I wish this could incline more to our rural women, as they are not benefitting from such empowerment initiatives.

Furthermore, we have signed another service level agreement with *Blue Action Trading* as traction to facilitate the Business Plan Launch Pad competition around the province. These business launch pad competitions aim to create an opportunity for anyone including women, with business ideas or existing business, who finds it difficult to secure a conventional commercial funding, to be considered for access to start-up or expansion funding. The competition process and evaluates all the entries and scores them on the basis of their business viability and suitability for the funding criteria. As a department, we are going to conduct workshops throughout the province to inform women about this initiative. We need to grab this opportunity with two hands, and utilise for our benefit.

Like President Jacob Zuma said when delivering the ANC's January 8 Statement in Galeshewe in the Northern Cape last month, we must continue to *"build a state that is democratic, people-driven and people-centred, and we must (also) pursue a sustained development based on an inclusive growth path."* By teaching you including myself, how to fish, we are actually contributing towards a developmental state, where self-reliance and sustainability reign. Further taking you down memory lane, in his inaugural State of the Province Address last year, Premier David Mabuza also committed that the government will ensure that young women and people with disabilities *"participate meaningfully in the mainstream economy"*.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is quite evident that we still have a long road to travel in order to ensure that the women folk participate meaningfully and benefit equally from the mainstream economy. As a Department, we commit to ensure that women are fully capacitated; and to ensure that they participate meaningfully in the mainstream economy.

As I close, in 122 days from today, our country will host the first ever FIFA World Cup games to be held on the African soil. We have also as a province, been an opportunity to host some of the soccer matches. It is an opportunity as aspiring entrepreneurs, that we cannot let pass-by, without claiming a share from it. My best advice is, “if you want to finish an elephant, you must start by eating it piece by piece. If you want to rush and eat it as a whole, you will never succeed.” The message is, all those who have made it in the business world, started small and eventually managed to finish the elephant.

It is never too late if you are inspired and dream to achieve something. The best time to live your dream, is now. Stand up and look for opportunities where no one has ever considered.

On behalf of MEC Mahlangu and the management of the Department, I wish you fruitful deliberations for today. We hope that by “*teach you how to fish, we would fed you for a lifetime!*”

***Malibongwe igama lamakhosikazi!***

***Ndiyabulela!***