

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY MEC CNM PADAYACHEE AT
THE INTRODUCTION OF MPUMALANGA BRAND AT THE
TOURISM INDABA ON 10 MAY 2008.**

The honourable Premier of Mpumalanga, Thabang Makwetla
Members of the MTPA Board
The Acting Head of Department, Mr Lemmy Mdluli
The Acting CEO of MTPA, Mr Abe Sibiya
Captains of the Tourism industry
Honoured guests
Members of the media
Ladies and gentlemen

Thank you very much to everyone who has joined us in this exciting and very important event. It is indeed a privilege to be accorded this opportunity to welcome you to Indaba (for the second time since we arrived here). This event is very important because we are here to introduce the Mpumalanga brand to the many delegates who are here, attending the Indaba. As we have said previously, the Tourism Indaba presents us with multitudes of opportunities. And as we introduce the brand to the tour operators, destination marketers, tourism product owners, tourism students, you will agree with us that this is indeed an opportune moment especially as we are in the process of strengthening awareness about the brand.

The fact that we are introducing this brand to as many people, mostly who are in the tourism and related industry shows that we are able to master the principle of efficiency in our business.

Honorable Premier, when the Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism, Ms Ms Rejoice Mabudafhasi welcomed the delegates to the Tourism Indaba, she said: "Africa reverberates with the rhythmic chants of song and the bleating of the vuvuzela! We are ready - let's play ball!", I was reminded that Mpumalanga took the centre stage since we arrived here.

From the great sounds of our own cultural group, Matsamo which mesmerized the audience, to actual reflection of our beautiful Mpumalanga in the videos that were watched by thousands of

delegates here, indeed Mpumalanga ensured that “Africa reverberate with the rhythmic chants of song....”

Ladies and gentlemen, the introduction of the brand to you today, is in essence a welcome to the real place of birth - the land where the pioneering spirit reverberates throughout and the beating of the African drum signals the start of another beautiful day in Mpumalanga.

I am very pleased that we are reaching beyond the borders of the province, continent to the world all at once with the introduction of this brand here at the Indaba. The Indaba truly complements in many ways the efforts that are and will be undertaken to promote Mpumalanga as the province of the origin.

Honourable Premier, we are indeed making strides to reflect, in our dealings, that the pioneering spirit reverberate throughout our business, throughout our way of living and even in the playground.

A week before we come to the indaba, we launched the Tourism Forum. This forum will assist us to get in touch with the real feelings of the industry. It will also, assist in ensuring that together with the industry we can map a new way of doing our business. The forum has been welcomed by many as the start of many good things to come as we begin a process to turn around the tourism in the province.

We are going to make it work, because it is in the interest of all the members and associated individual to make work.

The process of finalising the tourism development strategy is gaining momentum. We believe the strategy will assist in pioneering new way of improving tourism in the province.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mpumalanga Aces showed us how it is to be from the province of the firsts. They have reminded that in us there is a pioneering spirit and hence they are the first team at the first division level to compete in the finals of the prestigious soccer tournament in the country. They have already won by representing that which the province stands for.

In conclusion, let me invite the Honourable Premier, Thabang Makwetla to address us on the Mpumalanga brand.

I thank you