

**MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY HONOURABLE PREMIER
R.M. MTSHWENI-TSIPANE ON THE OCCASION OF THE
LAUNCH OF THE “MASSIFICATION OF SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND
EMPLOYMENT CREATION OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE FUND LABOUR
ACTIVATION PROGRAMME”**

DATE: 24 APRIL 2024

VENUE: MBOMBELA, EHLANZENI DISTRICT

**Programme Director, (and our MEC) Mme Lindiwe
Ntshalintshali;**

**Honourable Minister of Employment and Labour,
Honourable Thulas Nxesi;**

**Acting Director-General of the Department of
Employment and Labour, Ms Onke Mjo;**

**Commissioner for the Unemployment Insurance Fund
(UIF), Mr. Teboho Maruping**

**Honourable Members of the Executive Council in our
midst;**

Members of the Provincial and Local Houses led by the Chairperson of the Mpumalanga House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders Kgoshi Lameck Mokoena;

The Executive Mayor of Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Cllr Jesta Sidell;

The Executive Mayor of Mbombela Local Municipality, Cllr Sibongile Makushe-Mazibuko;

All Councillors in our midst;

Senior Government officials led by Acting Director General, Mr. Peter Nyoni;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Sanibonani;

Dumelang;

Avhuxeni

1. Programme Director, it is an honour and a privilege for me to be part of this occasion as we launch the ***“massification of skills development, enterprise development and employment opportunities through***

the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) Labour Activation Programme”

2. From the Freedom Charter to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the labour market has been at the centre of the democratic movement’s development agenda
3. Our people gathered at Kliptown in 1955 proclaimed in the Freedom Charter that;

“There shall be work and security- all who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers”

4. Long before it became fashionable, the democratic movement understood that “decent work” is not only important for people to earn a livelihood but allows them to fully participate in society, while affording them a sense of dignity and worth.

5. Minister of Employment and Labour, Cde Thulas Nxesi, we are proud to host you in the “Province of the rising sun”.
6. Your presence here is testament to the commitment of the African National Congress-led government to the practical realization of the promises it made to the people at the last elections in 2019.
7. In 2019 our people voted into power this ANC-led government and provincial administration because it presented an Election Manifesto that was coherent and encompassing a bold people’s plan for a better life for all, addressing the persistent realities of unemployment, poverty and inequality.
8. Economic transformation and job creation were the key priorities for strategies and initiatives adopted by this administration as we sought to respond to the cries of our people

9. Programme Director,

10. The last five years have been difficult. They were a period marked by significant ‘turbulence’ that included the worst global health pandemic in close to a century, geopolitical rivalries and conflicts (Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Gaza etc.) supply chain disruptions, persistent inflation and high interest rates, and finally, climate change and adverse weather events.
11. Nevertheless, this ANC-led government soldiered on and today we are reaping the fruits. As we speak, the national economy has reached pre-pandemic levels.
12. In our province, while we acknowledge the suffering of those who are unemployed, we are happy to see that by December 2023 the levels of employment were higher than before the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Mpumalanga is one of the few provinces that has experienced a net job gains in the past two quarters of 44 151 jobs in Quarter 3 2023 and 48 000 in Quarter 4 2023.
13. A weak global economic outlook and domestic structural impediments to economic growth such as load shedding, logistical and transport constraints have often

meant that labour absorption by the private sector has been low and the unemployment rate has continued to rise

14. As a provincial government, we are proud that in 1996 there were 627 000 people employed in the province, and by the end of 2023 this number had increased to more than 1.25 million people.
15. In line with Mpumalanga Vision 2030 we shall continue to work hard to attain a target of 2.1 million people employed by 2030
16. On the other hand, we are a caring government that also realizes that more has to be done for the unemployed, the poor and destitute.
17. We are also particularly concerned that our country and Mpumalanga province continue to face unprecedented levels of youth unemployment.
18. According to most recent information from Statistics South Africa, (Quarter 4 of 2023), the unemployment rate for youth of working age (15-34 years) was 46.4%,

whereas the provincial unemployment rate stood at 34.9%. Females are also more likely to be unemployed than males at 37.3% compared to 32.8%.

19. **Programme Director,**

20. The respected 32nd president of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, once said (and I quote);

“No country, however rich can afford the waste of its human resources. Demoralization caused by vast unemployment is our greatest extravagance. Morally it is the greatest menace to our social order”

(end quote)

21. Minister Nxesi, we received with much happiness your announcement of 333 projects to provide training, small enterprise support and employment opportunities to 704 000 people across the country

22. We thank you and the Department of Employment and Labour for the commitment to addressing the

scourge of unemployment in our country through the UIF's Labour Activation Programme (LAP)

23. We welcome your efforts with open arms because we believe it will assist in unleashing the productive potential of the Mpumalanga labour force

24. As a province we eagerly welcome your willingness to collaborate with government departments, including provinces, and entities to massify jobs and enterprise creation

25. "Jobs, Jobs, Jobs" has also been our focus in the province. This is in line with Mpumalanga Vision 2030, and the Mpumalanga Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (MERRP), which are aligned with national programmes but prioritising specific areas that are relevant to the peculiarities of Mpumalanga.

26. Last year our province, with the provincial Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport taking a leading role, began implementing a jobs massification initiative and this included creating strategic partnerships with all stakeholders in to ensure that our people get the employment opportunities that they desperately need

27. By the end of January 2024, a total of 63 478 jobs were created through 21 identified programmes including the Siyatentela Road Maintenance Programme, Government Nutrition Programme, School Handymen and Tourism Safety Monitors to name a few.
28. Since 2021 and through the Presidential Employment Stimulus, we have trained and created a total of 65 296 job opportunities for unemployed youth in different schools.
29. One of our youth economic empowerment flagship programmes, the **Premier's Youth Development Fund**, has been showcased earlier and is an example of what can be achieved through enterprise development
30. Since its inception in 2019, the Premier's Youth Development Fund has disbursed R258 million to fund 182 youth owned enterprises.
31. Through enterprise development, we believe the Labour Activation Programme (LAP) will also contribute to the improved success of our Small, Medium and Micro-enterprises (SMME's) whose role is critical for economic growth and employment creation

32. Minister Nxesi, the challenge of employment creation, skills development and enterprise development is indeed certainly a huge one.
33. In our province we have recognized that its resolution is only through the collaboration of Government at all spheres, the private sector and broader civil society, including labour, and the institution of Traditional leadership, in line with the ideals of the District Development Model as championed by His Excellency, President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa
34. As I conclude, let me once again welcome Minister Nxesi and his team to our province and express our excitement and eagerness to support and collaborate with the Department of Employment and Labour, and all stakeholders in delivering skills, jobs, and opportunities for our people
35. This ANC-led government has the track record, vision, and ability to deliver work opportunities for communities across the length and breadth of our province

36. We will continue to be steadfast and committed to addressing the needs of our people in the years to come

37. Ladies and gentlemen, may we all rise as Minister Thulas Nxesi makes his way to the podium.

38. I thank you.