

Remarks by the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs Nomusa Dube-Ncube Northeast of England Online Trade Mission

08 September 2020

Mr Sihle Ngcamu – Programme Director;
Councillor Carl Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration, Durham County Council;
Mr. Nigel Casey – UK High Commissioner to South Africa;
Mr. James Ramsbotham – CEO of North East England Chamber of Commerce;
Mr. Richard Swart, Honorary Vice President of NEECC & International Relations Director for the South African Chamber of Commerce in UK;
Ms. Palesa Phili – CEO of Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
Mr. Kuseni Dlamini – Chairman of Aspen Pharmacare & Massmart;
Mr. Neville Matjie – CEO of TIKZN and all officials from TIKZN;
Members of the media;
Honoured Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning

I wish to extend warm wishes from more than 11, 1 million people of KwaZulu-Natal to our friends in the United Kingdom. We thank you for setting aside time to be part of this historic session.

This session is very timely considering the fact that September is both Heritage and Tourism Month here in South Africa.

As I want preparing for this session I thought about few events that cemented the bond between the people of KwaZulu-Natal and the people of the United Kingdom.

In 2017, we bid farewell to Zulu Warriors who attended the 135th King Cetshwayo Celebrations in Cardiff, Wales in the United Kingdom.

The Zulu warriors, were accompanied by the cast and the Zulu Royal Choir and participated in the re-enactment of the Battle of Isandlwana.

The participation of the Zulu Warriors in the King Cetshwayo Celebrations in the UK strengthened cultural ties between the people of KwaZulu-Natal and the United Kingdom.

It should be remembered that in November 2011, His Majesty, King Goodwill KaBhekuZulu hosted Prince Charles, Prince of Wales and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall.

In welcoming them, His Majesty expressed his appreciation on behalf of the people of KwaZulu-Natal for the continued visits of historians and ordinary people from the UK to the Annual Re-enactment of the Battle of Isandlwana. We hold this event every year in January.

Over the years, it has grown to be more than just a battle re-enactment but a celebration of diversity, and a great contributor of tourism revenue to the this province.

Every year we welcome visitors from the UK and all over the world to the old Kingdom of the Zulu people.

As the province we have set ourselves a target of increasing the number of tourists from the UK who attend the commemoration of the battle of Isandlwana.

In 2018 we welcomed the first direct flight between London - Heathrow and Durban.

This direct flight was a result of hard work involving all stakeholders from the province and the United Kingdom. It us our view as government that this route provides travellers - business and leisure - an altogether new level of convenience and a significant reduction in overall travel time, especially busy business travellers.

When international travel restrictions are lifted here in South Africa, we want to use this route to promote heritage tourism.

Ladies and Gentlemen, at this stage I wish to indicate that since we re-opened interprovincial air travel in August, we are satisfied with the level of adherence to health protocol by the aviation industry.

In addition, we are satisfied with how stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industry have been observing the health and safety measures.

As the department through our entities we are rigorously monitoring compliance with regulations. The majority of restaurants, bars and pubs have been adhering to the measures.

The opening up of domestic air travel has had a positive impact not only the aviation sector but the entire leisure and business.

Programme Director, I am sure most of you would like to know when are we likely to re-open international travel.

I can confirm that our National Minister of Tourism Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane is scheduled to submit a comprehensive plan on the recovery of South Africa's tourism sector to cabinet – this will include the reopening of international travel.

As government at national and provincial level, we are monitoring the risk of the virus spread and we are satisfied with the current downward trend of new infections. We are convinced that if this is sustained, we will move quickly towards the reopening of regional borders.

The rise in domestic tourism together with regional travel will help us build confidence for global travellers so that when we eventually open all are borders, we will be able to attract traveller as a safe destination.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we can't wait to welcome our visitors from the United Kingdom.

All of us in government we understand that because of historical ties, the UK is one of key source markets for this province. Ahead of the lockdown, there were over 100 000 visitors choosing KZN as their preferred destination.

Importantly, ahead of lockdown, the UK was ranked no 1 in terms of key arrivals. We are confident that when we re-open international travel, this route will undoubtedly open access to the entire European market which connects in Heathrow.

Programme Director, we cherish the opportunity to discuss with you how we can build our economies post COVID-19.

The line-up of speakers from this province will highlight key aspects of our economic recovery plan. But in the main, they will reflect on our programme of action focusing on how to ensure that KZN is a haven for foreign direct investment.

We are uniting our people behind a common goal of creating a prosperous province.

Importantly, we are investing more in social infrastructure such as education and health and to build transport networks that will become catalysts for socio-economic development.

KZN is an important hub of industrial development in sub-Saharan Africa, thanks to its rich natural resources and well-developed infrastructure.

As the province, we have identified nine prime targets for inward investment: textiles, clothing, plastic products, chemicals, fabricated metal products, automotive components, wood and wood products, footwear, machinery and appliances. Of these, primary and processed aluminium at world competitive prices from local suppliers, provides a real opportunity for investors in these sectors.

Richards Bay is the centre of operations for South Africa's aluminium industry. The Richards Bay Coal Terminal is the country's second-largest exporter of steam coal in the world. Richards Bay Minerals is the largest sand-mining and mineral-processing operation in the world.

The vehicle-manufacturing industry has created a considerable multiplier effect in component and service providers. The automotive leather industry is growing rapidly, with exports significantly increasing foreign exchange earnings.

KwaZulu-Natal is also undergoing rapid industrialization. Industries are found at Newcastle, Ladysmith, Dundee, Richards Bay, Durban, Hammarsdale, Richmond, Pietermaritzburg and Mandeni.

The manufacturing sector is geared for export, with nearly a third of South Africa's manufactured exports being produced in KwaZulu-Natal.

Following COVID-19, we are planning to strengthen the production of local products for exports.

We are inviting potential investors from the United Kingdom to consider the following projects in the future.

- Public Transport System;
- Renewable Energies Developments;
- Beach Resort Developments;
- Cruise Line Development;
- Dube Trade Port;
- KZN Aerotropolis;
- Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone;
- Clothing and Textile;
- Automotive Supplier Park;
- Logistics and Transport Infrastructure;
- Maritime.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my intention is not to make a long speech.

I want to close by stating that as we open up economic opportunities, we are paying a special focus on young people. They constitute the majority of the KZN population.

Approximately 36% of the provinces population are aged between 15-34 years.

It is critical that the talent and potential of our youth is fully developed and harnessed so that we can guarantee the continuous socio economic development of KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa.

We wish to collaborate with institutions of high learning and companies that are involved in skills development.

There is a strong realization that we will not achieve our job creation targets if our people are not appropriately reskilled to take up the new opportunities we are creating in various sectors of the economy.

With those words, I wish you a successful session.

I am looking forward to the celebration of partnership between KZN based companies and companies from Northeast of England.

Thank you