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## Eastern Seaboard Development Ministerial Engagement Strengthens Inter-Provincial Collaboration

Wild Coast Sun, Mbizana

The Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Honourable Velenkosini Hlabisa, led a crucial ministerial engagement on the Eastern Seaboard Development. The event was held in collaboration with the Premiers of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, Mr. Lubabalo Mabuyane and Honourable Thami Ntuli, who was represented by the KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Rev. Musa Zondi.

The engagement aimed to assess progress and strengthen collaboration across the four district municipalities involved in the Eastern Seaboard initiative - Ugu, Harry Gwala, OR Tambo, and Alfred Nzo.

The meeting was attended by various dignitaries, including Deputy Minister of Traditional Affairs, Prince Zolile Burns-Ncamashe; Chairperson of the National House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders, Kgosi Thabo Seatlholo; Chairperson of the KwaZulu-Natal House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, Inkosi Shinga; Chairperson of the Eastern Cape House of Traditional and Khoi-San, Nkosi Mpumalanga Gwadiso; and Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA) CEO, Ms. Pati Kgomo, who provided an overview of the progress made in the Eastern Seaboard Development Programme. She emphasised the prioritisation of funding for key projects that will drive regional growth.

Eastern Cape Premier, Honourable Lubabalo Mabuyane reflected on the Eastern Seaboard Development, saying, "For the past years, the focus has been on the East London to Port Elizabeth area. Now, it's time to implement development in our Wild Coast, which has been long overdue. We should investigate the potential for a speed train between Durban and East London. We must implement this plan together, ensuring that both KZN and the Eastern Cape prosper."

He further drew a comparison to China's fast-growing developments, urging faster and more efficient progress in the region.

CoGTA Minister, Honourable Velenkosini Hlabisa reinforced the need for teamwork, stating, "When we go out in public, we should work as a team, not as political parties. We have no time to waste. Our people have lived in poverty for too long, and it is now critical that we focus on completing this project in the next five years."

He also stressed the importance of engaging traditional leaders, adding that their active participation is vital to the success of the initiative.

Honourable Hlabisa further emphasised that Architects and Designers should incorporate African concepts into their designs, drawing inspiration from the rich cultural heritage. A prime example is the Moses Mabhida Stadium, which beautifully embodies the shape of an African basket. This kind of symbolism should guide the approach as the government champions the Eastern Seaboard Development over the next five years, ensuring that it reflects the identity and aspirations of the people it serves.

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Rev. Musa Zondi, echoed this sentiment, reminding attendees of the need to move quickly and efficiently in implementing the Eastern Seaboard Master Plan. He added that rural development is a key focus and that the inclusion of traditional leadership and community participation is essential for equitable growth.

In his remarks, Rev. Zondi, highlighted the significance of economic transformation and investment in the project. He said, “We are positioning the Eastern Seaboard as a hub for investment, focusing on tourism, agriculture, the ocean economy, and SMMEs. This initiative will not only create jobs but also foster sustainable development in the region.” The MEC further underscored the importance of infrastructure development, particularly the N2 Wild Coast Road and small craft harbours, as drivers of tourism and economic participation in coastal areas.

The Eastern Seaboard Development, launched in November 2021 by President Cyril Ramaphosa, represents a bold vision for integrating urban and rural development in the coastal regions of KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. The initiative continues to make strides with the Eastern Seaboard Master Plan and Transport Master Plan, developed by Zutari, serving as blueprints for sustainable growth.

## Resolutions

KZN MEC for CoGTA, Rev. Thulasizwe Buthelezi, concluded the session by committing both provinces to the following resolutions:

### 1. From Plan to Action:

The Eastern Seaboard Master Plan will now be translated into tangible progress with clear delivery timelines, ensuring that the vision moves swiftly from concept to reality.

### 2. Securing Funding:

A concerted effort will be made to mobilise the necessary resources and funding to ensure the success of the initiative, transforming the region into a thriving economic hub.

3. Collaborative Governance: All relevant stakeholders, including traditional leaders, municipalities, and government agencies, will form a joint task team to oversee the progress of the Eastern Seaboard initiative, ensuring that deadlines are met and obstacles addressed promptly.

4. Infrastructure Prioritisation: The task team will focus on fast-tracking key infrastructure projects such as the N2 Wild Coast Road and the development of small craft harbours in Ugu to stimulate economic activity in coastal regions.

5. Community-Centric Development: Traditional leaders and local communities will be actively involved in the decision-making process to ensure that the development reflects the needs and aspirations of the people in both urban and rural areas.

6. SMME and Youth Empowerment: Specific programs will be created to empower local SMMEs, cooperatives, and youth entrepreneurs, ensuring that the economic benefits of the Eastern Seaboard Development are widely shared across communities.

These resolutions reaffirm the government's commitment to driving inclusive and sustainable growth in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape through the Eastern Seaboard Development initiative.

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ISSUED BY THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

For further information, please contact:

Sinenhlanhla Mthembu | Media Liaison Officer and Spokesperson

071 871 6886