

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY HONOURABLE MUSA ZONDI, MEC FOR  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**OPENING REMARKS - INVESTMENT CONFERENCE 2026**

**15 OCTOBER 2026**

**DURBAN ICC**

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KwaZulu-Natal stands at an important moment in its economic development journey. As a province, we continue to pursue opportunities that will attract investment, strengthen our industries, expand our economy and create meaningful employment for our people.

Achieving these ambitions requires us to bring together government, the private sector, investors and other strategic partners to identify opportunities, build partnerships and turn our province's economic potential into tangible results.

It is against this backdrop that the KwaZulu-Natal Investment Conference and South African Automotive Week assume particular significance.

Programme Director, allow me to look ahead to the KwaZulu-Natal Investment Conference, a dynamic platform where businesses, investors, entrepreneurs, academia and policymakers connect to shape the future of this province through strategic partnerships, collaboration and deal-making.

This year, we have brought two flagship platforms together: the 2026 KwaZulu-Natal Investment Conference and South African Automotive Week. Combined, they form one powerful platform that places the automotive industry where it belongs: at the point where investment, industrialisation and localisation meet. When vehicle makers and component suppliers share the same rooms as investors, financiers and policymakers, partnerships form faster and deals move from discussion to signature.

With this integration, KwaZulu-Natal is cementing its place as an automotive industrial hub, building on the strong foundation laid by companies such as Toyota, Mahindra, MAN Truck and Bus, Volvo Group Southern Africa and Bell Equipment. These companies chose KwaZulu-Natal as a place to do business, and their commitment has helped make the automotive sector one of the pillars of our provincial economy, one that continues to grow in strength.

The numbers speak volumes. In 2025, direct domestic investment in the KwaZulu-Natal automotive industry rose by 15.5% to R1.454 billion, which is 61.6% above its pre-COVID 2019 level.

The sector's contribution to provincial GDP stood at R7.819 billion. Automotive exports rose by 52.9% to R43.2 billion, and the trade surplus grew by 63.6% to R22.7 billion. KwaZulu-Natal also continues to hold a significant position in the national industry. The province accounts for approximately 19.0% of automotive employment, 15.9% of automotive exports and 32.3% of goods-vehicle exports.

This tells us that confidence in KwaZulu-Natal as an automotive hub is strong.

Our manufacturers are supported by a growing network of component suppliers across the province. These include AGP Manufacturing and Engineering, a Tier 1 automotive component manufacturer in Pinetown and an enterprise development beneficiary of Toyota South Africa Motors, and Argento Trading, a 100% black-owned, women-led Cut-Make-Trim production facility in Isithebe that supplies companies such as Isuzu South Africa.

Our task now is to build on this foundation. The objective is to grow the entire automotive value chain, creating opportunities for local manufacturers, suppliers, entrepreneurs and SMMEs. Together, these businesses form an automotive supply chain that runs from parts and components, through assembly, to logistics and export. That chain is connected to the world through our ports, our road and rail corridors, and our Special Economic Zones, the Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone and Dube TradePort, positioning KwaZulu-Natal as an export base under the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Driving trade and investment remains at the heart of the Department's work. Through our investment promotion agency, Trade & Investment KwaZulu-Natal, we are working across the full investment journey: attracting new investors to the province, facilitating their projects through approvals, site selection and partnerships, and tracking commitments through to implementation.

In the automotive sector, this means supporting both established manufacturers and SMMEs to deepen local supply chains, expand component manufacturing and increase localisation, so that more of the value created in our factories stays in KwaZulu-Natal. It also means helping local suppliers become export-ready, connecting them to markets across the continent and beyond.

Our aim is simple: every rand invested should create jobs, build local capability and strengthen the provincial economy.

## **PAUSE**

Minister Tau, TIKZN - which works closely with your department, has compiled KwaZulu-Natal Investment Opportunities Booklet, a portfolio of investment opportunities from across the province. It gives investors direct insight into projects that can generate commercial returns while contributing to the development of KwaZulu-Natal.

Ladies and gentleman, collectively, these projects represent more than R90 billion in potential investment. They span the sectors central to our future growth: manufacturing, logistics, renewable energy, tourism, healthcare infrastructure, agriculture, mining, property development and industrial expansion.

The booklet is a deliberate effort to bring opportunities closer to the market. Each project is ready to engage with partners, financiers and developers, and each one aligns with our long-term ambitions: industrialisation, infrastructure development, export growth, energy security and sustainable employment.

It is not only a reflection of where KwaZulu-Natal is today. It is an indication of where we are going.

Minister Tau, Honourable Premier, and TIKZN Board Chairperson, may I present to you the KZN Investment Opportunities Booklet 2026-2028.

## **(USHERS HANDS BOOKLETS TO THEM)**

To the investors, manufacturers, financiers and partners in this room: I invite you to study these opportunities and to engage with Trade & Investment KwaZulu-Natal as your partner in finding the right project for mutual benefit.

To facilitate funding opportunities for some of these projects, the Investment Conference will host a deal room where financiers and project owners can meet face

to face and establish partnerships that turn opportunities into bankable, investment-ready projects.

## **INTRODUCTION OF THE PREMIER:**

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my honour and privilege to invite the Honourable Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, the Honourable Thamsanqa Ntuli, to address this important gathering.

Honourable Premier, today's engagements reflect our collective commitment to positioning KwaZulu-Natal as a preferred destination for investment, industrialisation and sustainable economic growth.

Through the KwaZulu-Natal Investment Conference and South African Automotive Week, we are creating platforms that bring government, business and investors together to unlock opportunities, strengthen partnerships and create jobs for the people of our province.

Your leadership continues to be important in driving our provincial development agenda and ensuring that KwaZulu-Natal remains open for business, innovation and investment.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the Honourable Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, the Honourable Thamsanqa Ntuli.