

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KZN MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, REV. MUSA ZONDI ENGAGES WITH SISONKE LIQUOR ASSOCIATION AND OPERATION VULA FUND REPRESENTATIVES

Meeting with Sisonke Liquor Association – Addressing Concerns in the Liquor Industry

On Thursday, 3rd October 2024, the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism, and Environmental Affairs, Rev. Musa Zondi, met with representatives from the Sisonke Liquor Association to address concerns from the industry, particularly those related to the licensing process for liquor businesses, including bottle stores and taverns.

During the meeting, the association raised their dissatisfaction with the complicated and overly centralized system of license renewal and fees. They emphasised the bureaucratic red tape that businesses must navigate, which causes delays and frustrations.

The MEC acknowledged the challenges faced by the liquor industry and assured the association that their concerns would be looked into. He expressed a desire to see the system become more user-friendly, allowing businesses to focus on growth rather than compliance issues.

Furthermore, Rev. Zondi reiterated that the KZN Liquor Act still stands but assured participants that the government will focus on streamlining processes for smoother compliance. The MEC also underscored the importance of elevating black participants within the liquor industry, ensuring they can grow and succeed in this space.

Operation Vula Fund Meeting – Moving Forward with Tier 1 and Expanding Communication

On Friday, 4th October 2024, Rev. Musa Zondi held a meeting with representatives of the Operation Vula Fund (OVF) to discuss the progress of disbursements and address any outstanding issues regarding the backlog in applications.

The MEC informed the representatives that Tier 1 of the Operation Vula Fund is now moving forward, and the backlog that had been delaying the process will be resolved, and disbursement will

begin with effect from 1st November 2024. Communication channels have also been reopened to ensure that applicants are kept informed throughout the process.

Rev. Zondi, on behalf of the department and the government, issued a formal apology for how applicants were treated during the backlog period and the lack of communication, which caused distress. He emphasised that this marked a fresh page for the Operation VulaFund, with improved response times and transparency.

The MEC's office also offered to step in and intervene in cases where there are concerns or delays in response from the department. Additionally, it was agreed that the processing of Tier 2 and Tier 3 applications will be fast-tracked in the next financial budget.

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

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