

**REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, REV. MUSA ZONDI**

**KZN MARITIME ROUNDTABLE**

**5 SEPTEMBER 2025**

**MSC NELSON MANDELA CRUISE TERMINAL, PORT OF DURBAN**

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Programme Director;

CEOs of Entities;

Executive Management of Government Departments;

Maritime Industry Leaders and Stakeholders;

Distinguished Guests;

Our Learners;

Ladies and Gentlemen; Good Morning!

It is a great pleasure to address you this morning at this significant session, which is aligned with the World Maritime Day that is observed globally in September. The 2025 theme as seen on the video is **“Our Ocean, Our Obligation, Our Opportunity”**.

As we gather here today in the heart of Durban, the continent’s busiest port, we recognize the ocean’s essential role not only to our provincial and national economy but also to the global economy.

The ocean facilitates over 80% of international trade, provides food and livelihood to our communities while regulating our planet’s climate. As per the World Maritime Day 2025 theme, our ocean urges us to confront the pressures we place upon it, which results in pollution and overuse, subsequently resulting in catastrophic climate change triggers.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the 2025 IMO theme for the World Maritime Day resonates deeply with our provincial mandate to drive economic growth through innovation, inclusivity and sustainability. Our coastline that stretches approximately 600 kilometres is more than a natural asset, it is the engine for our economy.

The Port of Durban alone handles over 60% of South Africa’s container traffic, contributes an estimated R90 billion in revenue, and supports more than 100 000 jobs in KZN, while our boat building sector generates a revenue value of approximately R250 million with charter vessels dominating the sector.

The fishing industry, on the other hand, generates approximately R1,7 billion reflecting modest growth driven by export recovery and aquaculture expansion.

However, the Port of Durban, the boat building sector and the fishing industry reflects the province’s efforts to balance economic contributions with ecological stewardship by aligning their operations with IMO regulations on sustainable development.

For instance, Transport National Ports Authority (TNPA) allocated about R2 billion during the 2023-2024 financial year for green initiatives - including shore power systems, emission monitoring and digital logistics platforms to reduce vessel idling.

On the other hand, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment's (DFFE) Total Allowable Catch (TAC) system reduced overfishing by 15 % in 2024, stabilizing stocks such as rock lobster which resulted in fishing cooperatives receiving 20% of quotas.

Additionally, 80% of KZN's commercial fishing fleet has installed Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) in order to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing by 10% while community-led clean-up campaigns removed about 50 tonnes of marine debris along our coastline in 2024.

*In elaborating further on the 3 pillars that compose this theme in relation to the KZN vision: **Our Ocean** - is our shared heritage that houses our warm marine ecosystems - from coral reefs of the Aliwal Shoal to the migratory routes of our fisheries.*

**Our Obligation** - is to continue aligning our economic development plans with IMO standards through our provincial and local authority strategies while extending this obligation to combating climate impacts like rising sea levels that endanger our coastal communities.

**Our Opportunity** - as the whole theme ties directly to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 09, 13 & 14, which talks to life below water, climate action and industry, innovation and infrastructure, as KZN, this is a call to position ourselves as Africa's maritime hub for the green and blue economy while sustaining our position as a gateway to the maritime logistics communities globally.

This vision talks to the potential renewable and just transition energy, eco-friendly ship and boat building sector and digital efficient port operations.

These opportunities can be achieved in aligning with embracing alternative fuels, automation of our day-to-day operations and inclusive training programs for our youth and women in order to create high quality jobs and boost inclusive economic growth in under-served communities of KwaZulu-Natal.

So distinguished partners and stakeholders, as we look ahead, our collective resolution must be to drive an economy that is both inclusive and sustainable.

KwaZulu-Natal's growth will be measured not only in the size of its GDP, but in the number of lives it uplifts, the dignity of work it creates, and the opportunities it opens for women, youth, and rural communities.

This requires us to commit to partnerships, to innovation, and to building pathways where no one is left behind.

Equally, we must pledge to advance a sustainable ocean economy as a cornerstone of our future prosperity. With the Indian Ocean at our doorstep, the blue economy can no longer be an untapped promise – it must become a pillar of trade, tourism, fisheries, renewable energy, and marine conservation.

Our resolutions today must be clear - to manage our oceans wisely, to protect ecosystems while creating jobs, and to ensure that every community along our coast shares in the wealth of these resources.

So, ladies and gentlemen, as we deliberate during the roundtable sessions let us commit to turning words into action. Together, let us move with purpose, with unity, and with urgency – to secure an economy that is inclusive, resilient, and sustainable for KwaZulu-Natal and for generations to come.

I therefore call on all the attendees present here today to forge partnerships that will help the Province of KwaZulu-Natal to sustain its ocean economy in an environmentally friendly manner in order to secure better livelihoods for future generations to come.

In closing, let us draw inspiration from the IMO Secretary-General's message which says **“protecting the ocean is a shared duty and a pathway to a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive future”**.

As we navigate these waters together, KwaZulu-Natal stands ready to lead, innovate and prosper. Thank you for honouring this round table engagement with your attendance and I look forward to our fruitful discussions today.

**I thank you!**