

***Address by KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development & Tourism, Mr
Michael Mabuyakhulu during the South African Women's Open Gala Dinner
held on the South Coast on 17th April 2013***

Programme Director;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;
All Protocol Observed.

We wish to start by thanking you for inviting us to come and address this important soiree which is a demonstration of the contribution made by women in the field of sport and economic development, particularly in the golfing arena.

We are grateful to the sponsors that continue to support sports and, more importantly, the investments made towards encouraging designated groupings like women to claim their rightful place in all games. Further, as we kick start the South African Women's Open, we are also thrilled by the news that Ms Nobuhle Dlamini has once again clinched this year's Sanlam South African Women's Amateur Championships that took place in Gauteng in the past three days. Well done for her achievements.

We are hopeful that her victory will not only enhance the profile of women in this male dominated game, but will also inspire young women, especially from the historically disadvantaged communities, to consider this sport as their future pastime that have potential to turn their lives around for the better. But we need more financial support to the women sport which would attract more participants that could build their careers around golf.

While we appreciate the increment in prize money that rose from last year's two hundred and sixty thousand euros to two hundred and ninety thousand euros this year, but it's still pales in comparison with investments and prizes associated with the male dominated professional and amateur tournaments. This implies that together with bodies campaigning for the elevation of women sports such as the Executive Women's Golf Association, Women's Professional Golf Association and

Ladies European Tour, we still have a serious challenge to overcome to bring women to the mainstream of this lucrative game.

Women are still concentrated in the amateur levels and we have to reverse this through systematic development of golf from junior levels as we all want to see more female golfers benefiting from the huge sponsorships and endorsement investments prevailing in this game and others. Without tangible incentives in the form of prizes and publicity, women's golf will remain on the periphery for some time hence we have to join forces in the process of enhancing its image by lifting it from the doldrums of being perennially locked in the amateur ranks.

In KwaZulu-Natal we have acknowledged that sport is not just providing space for enthusiasts to compete for glory, but it also serves as an instrument to bring about socio-economic change. As indicated above, billions of rands are generated through sport as we would acknowledge the hype around major global sporting events such as the Olympics and the FIFA Soccer World Cup. Many sports personalities earn their decent living through participation in different sports and it's undisputable that sports has significant role in our economies.

As a province we are therefore targeting both domestic and high profile international tournaments to leverage business and marketing opportunities for our province. Having successfully hosted some of the world class golf tournaments in the past few years, including the South African Women's Open last year, KwaZulu-Natal has become the darling of both business and general visitors that appreciate a wide range of tourism offerings featuring our year round warm climatic conditions, tapestry of cultures and of course exquisite landscape. Some of them, especially those that are business inclined, having participated in these events, do use their experience to enquire about business and investment opportunities in the diverse sectors of our economy. We have truly become the world's most preferred play ground as we boast some of the best sporting and hospitality facilities that are enhanced by second to none customer service.

We are therefore delighted to be associated with the South African Women's Open tournament which further reminds all of us that women are equally capable of

engaging in any form of sport like their male counterparts provided they are afforded the same opportunities. As a province that unwaveringly subscribes to the promotion of equal opportunities for all sections of our society, this occasion offers us that space to demonstrate our commitment to equality. We believe that the ever increasing profile of this golfing contest will positively contribute towards the development of confidence amongst our fellow women compatriots to challenge for bigger things in life beyond the confines of the golf courses and other sporting arenas. Certainly some of the women golfers involved in this tournament are established entrepreneurs in their own rights and we therefore believe that as they descend on this coastal province, like the male business golfers they also use this experience to explore business and investment opportunities available in various sectors in our province's economy. This is the opportunity to network amongst themselves around possible business deals, both domestically and globally as we have many participants hailing from other countries.

As women continue with their struggle to seek equality and recognition as equal citizens in their respective societies, their efforts in sport shouldn't be separated from their battles to find space in the economic field. With the participation of women golfers from all parts of the world, which I am told features more than twenty nations, we should use this as an inspiration for our own women who might be still locked in the thinking that this game is for men only. As the name suggests that this is an OPEN game, we should endeavour to promote golf to OPEN more opportunities for women – not only in sport in the crudest sense of the word, but with respect to business as we are all aware that golf alone contributes a staggering \$20 billion to the global economy.

While it helps to have a starting point to launch an effective campaign to bring about real social equality in our societies, this could be expected in sport as well. The gender based Women's Open we believe should just serve as a launching pad for women's challenge on men's monopoly on prestigious games such as golf, but for long term levelling of playing fields we should strive for the people's sport that is devoid of gender stereotypes to avoid perpetual subjugation of women on the parameters of activities such as golf.

We believe that in the near future, we will have golfers gracing our courses without being defined along gender lines – where players would be judged on their prowess and talent on the field of sport. In view that golf is not limited to separating the best participants from mediocrity, but it is also used as a rendezvous for business people to network and clinch lucrative trade deals, we can't afford having women being excluded from interacting with their business contemporaries. The compartmentalisation of sport around gender differences should be given serious consideration as we have to collapse the male-female differences that often benefit men than women if allowed to flourish without questioning their transformational status. Women effectiveness and growth in business and strategic decision making structures should be promoted through their unhindered interaction with their male counterparts to engage in all facets of life and business through initiatives such as sport. In our annual business event, uMyezane Business Awards we have featured golf as a business networking initiative and we are delighted to report that we have had women participating as equals with male golfers.

We have to ensure that women don't pursue golf as a social avenue where they come to relieve themselves of the pressures associated with work and family commitments, but we have to illustrate that they could make fulfilling careers in this game – and become respected figures like our own Ernie Els and Retief Goosen. We want Thandi Cunningham, Stacy Bregman, Nobuhle Dlamini and Ashleigh Simon to enjoy the same status and financial benefits like their contemporaries in the game of golf. With the increased commercialisation of sport contributing to social status of those that pursue sport with passion, women can't be expected to only take the crumbs while men continue to rake substantial benefits through massive financial transactions such as prizes and advertising endorsements.

We are told that around 2008 sport made about \$600 billion of world travel and hospitality sector. Certainly golf could be expected to feature prominently in this figure. The question is how much of this revenue related to women sport or benefited women? Without having any researched information on this, one could be forgiven to guess that it was males that still scooped more benefits and women should know that until they organised themselves into coherent blocks seeking equitable space in

the field of sport, we will continue having skewed access to sporting opportunities as is the case in other social aspects.

As stated in the initial paragraphs, in KwaZulu-Natal we regard sport as a key ingredient for socio-economic transformation. Sport also contributes in building bridges across all social divides such as gender, culture, economy, religious and linguistics. Now that we have South African Women's Open being held on our shores it's our intention to see more women, especially from historically excluded communities swelling the ranks of women golf which would leverage power for women to demand more space and recognition in this prestigious game. Once we have more women daring prevailing negative attitudes from the chauvinistic male golfing fraternity, we are likely to see more resources being channelled towards women participants – and then the golf courses being opened for mixed golfers competing for same sporting accolades without being labelled through gender profiles. We are longing for the future where both golfing fraternity and sorority would converge and see themselves as equals that have to contribute to the development of golf as an essential sport to improve the socio-economic status of our people through business opportunities aligned to sporting events.

Finally ladies and gentlemen, let me wish all of you a splendid and memorable tournament. KwaZulu-Natal will continue to support all forms of sports as long as this is in the interest of empowering our people and marketing of our province as an ideal investment and tourism destination. We are confident that the return of the South African Women's Open to the province will further enhance the province's status as the real hive for sport and other related activities. If there are any sections in our society that could guarantee the prospect of turning golf into a people's game rather than a pastime for a select elite, it would be women since they have the capacity to socialise our children to become rounded citizens that are not entangled in the discriminatory sentiments that still prevail in our sport. We therefore implore women to join hands in the promotion of golf as a sport that belongs to all of us as a nation and people of the world. To sponsors, keep on the good work!

I thank you.

Mr Michael Mabuyakhulu, MPP
MEC for Economic Development & Tourism