

Remarks by KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development & Tourism, Mr Michael Mabuyakhulu on the occasion of the official opening of the Tourism Indaba at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli ICC, Durban, 10th May 2014

Programme Director;

Honourable Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ms Tokozile Xasa;

Honourable Ministers of Tourism of Mozambique,

Honourable Minister of Tourism from the Seychelles,

Honourable Minister of Tourism from Swaziland,

The Chairperson of the Board of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Sadha Naidoo;

Members of the Board of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal;

The CEO of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Ndabo Khoza;

Esteemed members of the national and international tourism trade;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

IT is an honour to once again stand before you today, at an occasion which marks the official opening of the 2014 Tourism Indaba – an event which has over the decades proven itself to be one of the critical pillars of the fortunes of our tourism sector in the province.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I stand before you today, I do so on behalf of the Premier of the Province, Honourable Senzo Mchunu, who despite his desire to be a part of today's proceedings, could not do so owing to other matters requiring his attention.

In this regard, we would like to officially extend a cordial welcome to all our visitors to the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, who have already began to experience the magic of the Zulu Kingdom.

Programme Director, now in its 35th anniversary and edging towards its 40th, the Tourism Indaba continues to serve as an ideal pedestal from which to profile South Africa's and indeed the entire African continent's tourism offerings to the rest of the world.

It is therefore apt that that for this year's instalment of this tourism showpiece we have adopted the theme of **'Plugging into Africa's growth'**. The significance of this theme is not lost on us, not least because Africa continues to be the springboard of global growth for tourism.

The central message therefore, ladies and gentlemen, behind this year's installment of the Indaba is that for African economies to be able to sustain their economic growth, there is a definite need for an increased tempo in the levels of attracting and indeed retaining existing tourists. For this to happen, however, we need as African States, to work together towards forging closer synergies, to create symbiotic relationships which will ensure that we use tourism as a tool to acquire our pound of flesh from foreign exchange earnings, contribution to our governments' revenues, and the generation of employment and business opportunities.

In this regard, we, as KwaZulu-Natal, have a close working relationship with Mozambique, The Kingdom of Swaziland and the Seychelles wherein we have joined hands in order to enhance our cooperation on matters related to tourism promotion.

This, we did through the establishment of the EAST3ROUTE tourism route – an initiative established in 2011 to promote tourism and investment between KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland, Mozambique and latterly, Seychelles.

Programme Director, it is universally accepted that tourism is a significant, even essential, part of the local economy, meaning that a thriving tourism sector augurs well for the economic fortunes of a country or region. Equally, the converse of this is that the importance of local economies can also be illustrated by the impacts when tourism is disrupted.

What this means for us is that we have to get the basics right. This necessitates that we ensure that we make the necessary infrastructure improvements at a local level, such as better water and sewage systems, roads, electricity, telephone and public transport networks, all of which can improve help facilitate tourism.

Programme Director, according to a World Bank report published towards the end of 2013 entitled: "Tourism in Africa: Harnessing Tourism for Improved Growth and Livelihoods," African countries are poised to compete with – even surpass other tourist-rich regions of the world if they can effectively plan for and integrate tourism into their economies.

The report suggests that the tourism industry in Sub Saharan Africa's is set to spur more economic growth for the continent and directly employ 6.7 million people by 2021. Drawing on the experiences of countries such as Cape Verde, Kenya, Mauritius,

Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and others, who have simplified their tourism policies, liberalized air transport and diversified tourism while protecting their communities and environments, the report advances the argument that this has created a positive investment climate for tourism development. Additionally, the report states, ***“33 of Sub Saharan Africa’s 48 countries currently have the capacity for tourism success through establishing strong political support for developing the industry and attracting increased private investment to help finance and sustain it.... if developed effectively and managed efficiently over time, tourism has the potential to accelerate Africa’s economic growth and job creation. It can also help accelerate the reforms needed to improve airline and road transport as well as other key infrastructure, besides raising the incomes of young men and women, who form a high percentage of the job holders in the sector.”***

Ladies and gentlemen, according to statistics by the World Bank, in 2012, Africa attracted 33.8 million visitors, up from a low 6.7 million visitors in 1990, and its receipts from tourism for the same year amounted to over US\$36 billion, or 2.8 percent of the region’s GDP.

This pointedly suggests that provided we get the basics rights, we are indeed poised to successfully **‘plug into Africa’s growth.’**

I would like to again welcome you all to the Province of KwaZulu-Natal and to the 2014 installment of the Tourism Indaba. We have no doubt that during your stay here you will find time to experience the hospitality of our people.

I thank you

