

**ADDRESS BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
TOURISM, THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL MABUYAKHULU ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE WELCOMING DINNER FOR THE VOLVO GOLF CHAMPIONS 2013 EDITION**

**8 JANUARY 2014**

**Programme Director;**

**Dignitaries Present;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

**All protocol observed.**

On behalf of the provincial government of KwaZulu-Natal and the people of this province, we wish to welcome all the participants to this year's edition of the Volvo Golf Champions, an event which has not only earned our province the reputation of being the preferred golfing destination but has also entrenched our position on the global tourism map.

As all of us know, this year's installment takes place on the back of the phenomenal success of the Volvo Golf Champions which took place last year. We, therefore, have no doubt that the 2014 edition of the Volvo Golf Champions will surpass expectations by proving, yet again, to be a runaway success.

As the provincial government, we would like to thank Volvo and IMG for working with us to bring this prestigious golfing tournament to the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Programme Director, as the province which is the biggest net attractor of domestic tourism and which is positioning itself as a tourism destination of choice globally, we rightly believe that there is no better way to kick-off the year than to host a golfing tournament of global stature; an event that will doubtless further cement our reputation as one of the much sought after tourism destinations in the world.

What makes us even more chuffed at hosting the Volvo Golf Champions is that as a province which is positioning itself as the home of mega events in the country, this event sets the tone for what will be another bumper tourism year for the province.

Critically, this event comes at a time when the province of KwaZulu-Natal is still basking in the afterglow of what, in many respects, has been another high noon of performance during the festive season after KwaZulu-Natal shrugged off what looked like a depressed consumer sentiment and performed better during the 2013 festive season.

While we are still tallying up the numbers, preliminary indications are that, in spite of the moderately depressed climate for consumers, the province has attracted in excess of more than 1,5 million tourists during the festive season and is poised to make more than R3 billion. This has surpassed our expectations as our initial projections were that the total economic impact during this season was going to hover around the R2-billion mark and that we were going to attract about 1,3 million tourists.

In this regard, Programme Director, this golfing tournament is a good omen for the province's tourism fortunes this year, coming as it does at a time when our province has done better than expected during the peak December holiday season.

Ladies and gentlemen, this tournament comes at a time when the tourism industry globally is hoping to do better than last year. According to a report which was released by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) last month, in the first nine months of 2013, international tourism grew by 5%, to reach a record of 845 million worldwide, an estimate 41 million more than in the same period of 2012.

The report further states that in Europe, the world's most visited region, international arrivals grew by 6%; while in Africa a 5% percent growth was recorded, with China becoming the number one source market last year. As all of us know, the full tourism numbers for 2013 will be released by the World Tourism Organization in Spain at the Fitur tourism trade show.

This, Programme Director, means that as the province of KwaZulu-Natal we have to continuously locate our tourism fortunes within the context of the changing global tourism environment if we are to improve as a tourism destination.

It is because of this reason that we have taken this decision to use events such as the Volvo Golf Championship as a springboard to promote our tourism offerings in a world that is rapidly changing.

Indeed, Programme Director, we can say without any fear of contradiction that our strategy is beginning to pay handsome dividends as evidenced by the economic impact assessment report that we have commissioned during and after the tournament last year.

The report revealed that the Volvo Golf Champions created an overall economic impact of R51 million for the eThekweni region as a whole and attracted more than 9 000 people who, because of the international stature of the event, had a far higher propensity to spend than domestic tourists. In this regard, tourist spend during last year's Volvo Golf Champions was at R863 per day, with many tourists spending as many as five days in the province.

In short, Programme Director, we believe that the benefits of hosting such events are there for everyone to see in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Once again, Programme Director, allow us the opportunity to welcome all the participants to the Volvo Golf Champions for 2014. We have no doubt that during your stay here you will also find time to experience the hospitality of our people and to sample some of the tourism treasures that make this province one of the most beautiful places on earth.

I thank you.

