
Remarks of the MEC for Economic Development,
Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development- Mr.
Lebogang Maile on the occasion of the Gauteng Economic
Indaba
Johannesburg
Wednesday, June 8 2016

Thank you MEC Mashatile - our able Programme Director

Your Excellency Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa
Minister of Finance - Mr. Pravin Gordhan
Minister of Trade and Industry - Mr. Rob Davies
Ambassadors and High Commissioners
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Honourable Premier David Makhura
Members of the Executive Council
Your Worships: Executive Mayors of our municipalities
Leadership of our system of local government represented
by SALGA
Our distinguished Panelists
Directors General present
Heads of Department
Leadership of organised labour
Leadership of organised business
Distinguished guests
Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Since assuming office in June 2014 the Gauteng fifth Provincial Administration has been seized with the onerous task of redefining what should constitute the agenda and vision of the Gauteng City Region. We needed to redefine our trajectory because 2014 was a momentous year for the country as we marked twenty years since the 1994 democratic breakthrough. Such significance occasioned the need for us to pause and take stock of the progress we have made and identify the challenges that we needed to tackle going forward.

One can say with a degree of certainty that all of us present here today are familiar with the contents of the various reviews that have been commissioned by government and some that have been produced by various research institutes as part of enriching the discourse about public policy, the economy and the broader social transformation issues.

Naturally the issue of the progress we have made has become a source of contention among various commentators and it has been clear both in the reviews to which we refer and the reality we confront each day of our lives that the challenges are there for all to see. Whilst we have accepted as matter of fact that more could have been done – we are also alive to the fact that we have progressed tremendously as a nation. As such the public

discourse that has become part of our daily diet; whether through news reports or meetings in our communities – today's economic indaba underscores a critical point: *that more can still be done, and certainly more will be done and all of us as we converge here today are part of that battalion that is prepared to make a contribution.*

In this instance a good number of those who are attending the Gauteng Economic Indaba have since become familiar with our pay off line: *Transform, Modernise, Re-Industrialise.*

It has become obvious to any sensible human being, to realise that, one of the greatest threats to the democratic dispensation as we have come to know it today – are the gross social and economic inequalities that have become part of the defining feature of our society today.

Accordingly, we run a risk that democracy may be meaningless to those who are unable to find work in order to support their families; take their children to tertiary institutions so that the youth are appropriately equipped to meet the challenges of the modern knowledge economy.

When it happens that some are able to complete studies in our institutions of higher learning; such celebrations are short-lived when they are unable to find work because they are either over qualified or lack experience. It is in these circumstances that democracy becomes a farce – because the economic relations or the relationship

between the majority and the means of production continue to reflect patterns as seen in our unfortunate past.

For most of the black owned small medium micro enterprises it has almost become a norm to experience a near collapse when their role is that of a mere conduit of certain goods and services because they either have no capacity to participate in the production function or at worst the public sector to which they depend for business – does not process their payments on time.

It is even more tragic when civil servants either collude to exclude certain suppliers in favour of others or put some in the unfortunate position of having to pay mandatory bribes as a way of securing future work or ensuring that an invoice is paid in time.

These are some of the challenges faced by the people in the townships whether in Diepsloot, Soshanguve or Sebokeng.

But perhaps more than these challenges - the question arises: what have you done?

This question relates directly to what my task is this morning.

Since 2014 one of the tasks we had committed to undertake was to engage with township based enterprises including aspirant entrepreneurs in order to better understand the challenges they face, collectively identify

areas of opportunity and then device means of ensuring that we take advantage of these opportunities.

The Gauteng Township Economy Revitalisation Summit gave birth to the strategy that identifies and defines in clear terms what needs to be done. This process has also given birth to a campaign that ran over a period of six months; Qondisa Ishishini Lakho is a drive through which we sort to encourage the formalisation of township based enterprises.

It was a deliberate move on our part because we had also taken a conscious decision that 30% of our procurement spending must be directed to the township based; youth owned, women owned and enterprises owned by people with disabilities.

In addition to these measures we have also been hard at work engaging with business in their organised formations. This engagement has ranged from the manufacturing sector, mining, financial services and others that make up the sectors we have identified as having potential to help us grow the economy.

Thus we have established a number of working groups whose task is to ensure that the decisions taken on a whole range of issues in the economy are implemented; they monitor progress and report on challenges and propose solutions.

We have come to better understand what are the

imperatives that drive an economy such as ours. We have also clearly defined what the role of government must be; especially as it relates to policy certainty and ensuring that the environment is conducive for the conduct of economic activities that benefit the people.

The stated purpose of the Economic Indaba today is for us to rigorously interrogate and further enrich the draft economic plan we are tabling here. The draft itself is a by product of a thoroughgoing process of question and input by various stakeholders. In the context of the TMR vision – the Economic Indaba must communicate a message of hope that work is being done to ensure that we eradicate the scourge of poverty and inequality.

Necessarily the Economic Indaba must also declare and reaffirm our commitment of building a globally competitive city region that is economically inclusive, ecologically sustainable and socially cohesive.

Thank you