

**SPEAKING NOTE FOR MEC MASITHELA (DTEEA)
LAUNCH OF THE FREE STATE TOURISM BRAND
DURBAN – ROYAL HOTEL
11 MAY 2008**

Program Director

Members of the Free State Executive Council

Members of the Free State Legislature

Mayors and Councilors

Chairpersons and members of the our Public Entities

Captains of the Industry

Patriotic Free Staters

Distinguished Guests

Ladies & Gentlemen

Two and halves years ago when I inaugurated the Free State Tourism Authority Board I outlined three key deliverable objectives; namely

- Tourism Master Plan
- Corporate Identity (Free State Tourism Brand)
- Interactive Provincial Tourism Website

It came clear from that meeting that these would be the three legacy projects from which this board's success would be measured against. Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to announce tonight that the board is on course.

In the past two and halves years both the FSTA Board and management have put their shoulders on the wheel to integrate the fragmented marketing and promotion of the Free State tourism.

Their coming into being in 2005 as an entity that will be focusing on marketing and promotion of the province was necessitated by the fact that the tourism sector has surpassed human expectation and confirmed to be the “new gold” especially in the Free State Province.

The past province’s fragmented approach to marketing of the Free State as a tourists destination has done us harm rather than good and we have all learned the lesson. The lesson we have learned is that as much as we have municipal demarcations dividing our province we cannot market the province from that angle, but we rather synergize the different potentials that each have and use it to centre ourselves in the heart of South Africa.

The holistic approach would assist the province to achieve what the FSTA has set itself through its vision and mission. The entity has identified its vision as: “For the Free State to be recognized as a preferred inland tourism destination and an essential part of the foreign tourist itinerary during their visit to South Africa”.

From the vision it becomes clear that the entity scope of mandate is to market and promote the province as a tourism destination. It therefore becomes clear as why the three legacy projects were central to first board of the Free State Tourism Authority.

The Tourism Master Plan - is crucial as it synergize all tourism strategies geared towards positioning the Free State as a preferred inland destination. Merging all strategies would ensure that the province increase the number of tourists and make them to stay longer and spend more money in our province.

The second legacy project was the development of the New Provincial Tourism Brand. This unifying symbol will forever be the face of the FREE STATE TOURISM. Whoever will be seen wearing this symbol will be an ambassador of the Free State advocating our centrality in the heart of South Africa. Every product bearing this symbol will be showcasing untapped resources that the province has to offer.

The brand will be the unifying symbol that markets and promotes the Free State from one basket with one purpose of attracting tourists from around the globe, the region and the continent to center themselves in the heart of South Africa.

Tonight we are proud as the Free State Government to say that this unifying tourism symbol represents every Free Stater as the brand architecture process was inclusive taking inputs across racial lines.

From these consultative processes with the Free State communities were got the mandated that the province's tourism brand must depict the following:

- Open skies
- Sand stone mountains

- Green hills
- Golden fields
- Hiking trails
- Horse treks
- Mountain climbing fishing
- Traditional villages
- Traditional music

All these attributes when summed up communicates to us a landscapes that is uncrowded, solitude, lots to be discovered and much to be seen.

Program director, our brand goes to respect the constitutional municipal boundaries that divide our province and depict those demarcations through the following colours:

BLUE – Xhariep

Grassy plains and endless vistas, start studded skies and a reflection of the vast water mass of the Gariep dam.

ORANGE – Thabo Mofutsanyana

Majestic sandstone mountains towering up from the valley and wild gorges created by centuries of wind, water and fire

GREEN – Fezile Dabi

Agriculture reguion, bread basket of the country

GOLD – Lejweleputswa

Gold riches locked in the earth is reflected in the gold wheat and sunflower fields above the ground

RED – Motheo

The foundation or strong base of building, heart of economic and industrial development of the province.

The last legacy project – the interactive tourism website was made to ensure that the FSTA live to the promise made in its vision when they said “...an essential part of the foreign tourist itinerary during their visit to South Africa”.

The website is essential to this market as research has indicated that most tourists plan their destination online, from tonight Free State will be viewed and known across the globe by a touch of a button and we are indeed proud of that.

Ladies and gentlemen, today the Free State is out of its closet we will be at your face (through our brand) and at your finger tips (online) so the onus is on you to centre yourselves in the Heart of South Africa.