

**SMME AND CO-OPERATIVES INDABA
WELCOME ADDRESS BY
MEC MOSEBENZI ZWANE**

Programme Director
Honourable Premier
MECs Present here
Mayors and Councillors Present
HODs and CEO's
Our Guests
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen
Good Morning

Today we are entering the 3rd day of the SMME & Cooperative Indaba which is one giant step towards Radical Socio Economic Transformation which the Africa National Congress has promised the people of this Country in its Manifesto when campaigning for the elections. Shortly after the elections the ANC in the Free State instructed that service delivery should be energised and all sectors of government should work together to ensure that Together we Move the Free State Forward.

This government under the leadership of President Jacob Zuma and Premier Ace Magashule has made a resolve that all we do shall stand or fall on how we succeed or fail to take seriously the National Development Plan. The NDP is the guiding principle of the Government's Programme of Action till 2030. Through this plan, the ANC government will ensure that unemployment falls from 27% in 2011 to 14% in 2020 and further to 6% in 2030. Total employment according to the NDP should rise from 13 million to 24 million.

This 3 day gathering for since monday aims to align all segments of business in one core Free State Value Chain. Our efforts are to associate, partner and support all business segments from Small

Medium and Macro Enterprises, Micro Enterprises, Co –operatives and big Businesses.

Monday and Yesterday we brought together the Micro Enterprises and SME and gave them the opportunity to tell this government what they would like to see happening in order to improve their situation. Today we are taking our discussion to another level. We have invited the business sector that is more organised, that already have formal business and have been in existence for a considerable time. Everybody who is here should have a registered business and hopefully having a turnover of more than R10 million. You should have in your employ at least more than 20 employees and have accountants that prepare credible financial statements for tax purposes..

We are therefore confident that we will be able to realize the objective of fighting the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. It is our desire as Government that the exercises we are undertaking today will help draw on the energies available here, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities within and among the businesses in the Free State, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnership throughout the society. That is our goal!!!

In line with this undertaking the Free State 2030 sets out the future the people of the Free State want. This plan states, “By 2030 the Free state shall have a resilient, thriving and competitive economy, that is inclusive, with immense prospects of human development anchored on the principles of unity, dignity, diversity, equality and prosperity for all”

Programme director what we would not like this engagement to be is a moaning session. I am certain that many people will agree with me when I say the people of the Free State, should take full responsibility for the state of the Free State economy.

Whilst this government has presented us with many opportunities, we are engaged in fights over tenders, blame each other for what has not happened and volunteer unpatriotic opinions about our own places of birth, rural and urban. We just refuse to see things from the same perspective which makes working together very difficult if not impossible.

To extricate the Free State from these evil, counter revolutionary and undemocratic practices, the Free State has to define its role and announce its presence in the economic space. To do this, the people of the Free State should embrace competition, cooperation, innovation and hard work among others.

If we are to succeed in these endeavours, we need to enhance the growth of emerging, new and established entrepreneurs that are in the process of setting up a business or already have a business they want to expand. Entrepreneurs should be encouraged to focus on where they can fill gaps in the market and seize unexploited or underexploited market opportunities.

Programme Director the Commissions today will have to build a solid base for a strategy in developing small businesses in the Free State. We would like to see active participation in the commissions so that we can share good practices and challenges so that we can see meaningful change in the way we do business. The habit of focusing solely on tenders has eroded the business principles as we know them. People are only interested at their balance sheet and ignore building capacity, sustainability, skills transfer and have become middle men and conveyer belts of finish products.

We want to change all that and develop a capable business sector. Some of the problems experienced by the business are known to the government and should be eliminated. Some of those are;

Programme Director, we know that "No Single Force Acting Individually can achieve the objectives we have set for ourselves" and we also know that if you want to walk fast, you can walk alone but if you want to walk far walk together. We are in this together and together we shall overcome.

I Thank You.