

SPEAKING NOTES

OFFICIAL HANDOVER OF RESORTS AND RESERVES/LAUCH OF TOURISM MONTH

VENUE: SANDVELD NATURE RESERVE

DATE: 28 AUGUST 2014

Programme Director
Honoured Guests
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentleman
Bomme le Bontate

Programme director, today we want to thank the Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs Ms Barbara Thomson for the two visits to the Free State since her appointment as Deputy Minister. She was at Mantsopa Local Municipality during World Day on Desertification on the 4th of July this year and now here at Tswelopele Local Municipality. This is an indication of good things to come. She started where predecessor DM Rejoice Mabudafhasi who had made the Free State her second home ended. It's an honour to receive and welcome a woman minister during this women month in the Free State.

We also want to thank the DM for agreeing that this event be held during the month when the country honours and pays tribute to the indomitable spirit of gallant women like Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Albertina Sisulu and Sophia Williams-De Bruyn. As a country we are proud of these women because they marched in 1956 to boycott the "Pass" laws and during that march.

We are indeed honoured that this event takes place today at the end August month as we prepare for the beginning of September which designated as tourism and heritage month. This gives us an opportunity to showcase what the Free State has to offer in the tourism industry. Tourism plays a significant role in economic development particularly job creation.

This handover contributes significantly to our endeavours as a province to improve tourism offerings in the Free State. These new facilities we are receiving today it's an opportunity for us to brag about as a province.

Despite the fact that all these five facilities that are being handed over today have been closed during the refurbishment and renovations, last year we managed to have 52 000 tourists that visited the resorts in the Free State. Available statistics from StatsSA further indicated that Free State was the 5th most visited province. We are now hopeful and confident that with this addition we will make more inroads in tourism.

The plan is to boost domestic tourism by attracting more people to visit these facilities and enjoy what the Free State has to offer. The Free State is endowed with natural resources like dams, rivers, mountains, and scenic views and blue open skies. We therefore urge and challenge the municipalities that are within these facilities to ensure that they are effectively marketed to their communities.

As the department, it is our duty to expose them to hunting, camping, skiing, fishing or rock climbing. The government officials also must not only visit these places as part of their work. They must be encouraged to bring families and loved ones as an experiential adventure and enjoy the outdoors life the Free State can offer.

This year we are celebrating tourism month under the theme “tourism transforming lives”, as announced by the Honourable Minister on Tuesday. With this theme, our aim is to focus our efforts in increasing tourism’s contribution to GDP and to contribute positively to addressing inequality and poverty. We are also focusing our efforts on using tourism to improve the underdeveloped areas of South Africa. The department has conducted environmental awareness programmes in 110 schools in the province in partnership with CATHSSETA and 200 community members were trained as Urban Rangers.

This is an outstanding job from DEA and a true example of Intergovernmental Relations and corporate governance where all three spheres of government, the National, Provincial and Local Government providing excellent service to the people of this province. We want our people in these areas to explore nature and promote “I love Free State” while developing and improving their lives. While we celebrate tourism month we should let the legacy of Tata Mandela live through everything we do.

I Thank You.

