

**Remarks by the MEC for Finance Nomusa Dube-Ncube and Introduction of KZN
Premier Sihle Zikalala**

KZN Economic Council Summit

29 April 2021

Programme Director - CEO of the Durban Chamber;
His Worship Mr Mxolisi Kaunda, the Mayor of eThekweni;
KZN Premier Sihle Zikalala;
My colleagues in the Executive Council;
Co-Chair of the Council;
Members of the KZN Economic Council;
Social Partners;
CEO of Chambers;
Captains of industry;
Senior Government Officials Present
Ladies and gentlemen

First and foremost, I wish to personally welcome presentations that have been made by all speakers before me. It is encouraging to witness such a level of detail in the presentations.

We must continue to share ideas and strategies on what we collectively need to do to help the people of this province navigate through this difficult period.

Importantly, I am encouraged by the excellent presentations by Organized Labour and Civil Society.

Perhaps, we may need to take these presentations a step further - by going to communities to allay fears. We need to demonstrate that something is being done to address economic challenges we are facing.

I am highlighting this because we continue to receive reports about public protests in areas such as Richards Bay where our strategic asset – the Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone is located.

Yesterday, members of the public who are desperate for jobs - burnt tires and vandalized road infrastructure around the Zone. It should be remembered that towards the end of 2020, we resolved as the council to visit Richards Bay after our visit to Mandeni.

Such public protests could be attributed to anxiety and feeling of hopelessness as a result of job losses.

Many people have been retrenched and condemned to rural villages and peri-urban informal settlements with no means of survival.

We need to use the KZN Economic Council as a structure to bridge the gap between government, big business, social partners and communities.

We must urgently meet with industry key stakeholders in various sectors such:-

- Construction and Property;
- Travel and Tourism;
- Creative Sector;
- Informal economy;
- Oceans and Digital Economy;
- Clothing and Textile Industry;
- Agriculture;
- Chambers;
- Local Economic Development Practitioners.

Programme Director, I must hasten to point out that as government we also move with speed and remove the red tape in order to ensure that government is effective.

With the support of the Premier and his executive council, we have stated that emerging entrepreneurs, the marginalized businesses and those in the informal economy must benefit from the R133 billion Provincial Budget that we have allocated to various government departments.

On this important day, we wish to reiterate that our procurement spend is the most important vehicle to transform our economy. Therefore, we have started working hard to ensure that emerging entrepreneurs are assisted by this government.

The people of KwaZulu-Natal want jobs and economic prosperity and for this to happen, we must work as a collective and fast-track their entry into different sectors of the economy.

As I introduce the Premier, there are few questions I would like to ask.

Before March 5 2020, we all thought we knew what the future would hold.

Not anymore. With the Coronavirus, the only certainty is that the future isn't what we thought it will be.

Will the province of KwaZulu-Natal survive economic challenges?

Are we going to see KZN losing its position as the second contributor to the national GDP?

Today's gathering has created an opportunity to examine answers to these questions.

Undoubtedly, we are called upon to prove the relevance of the KZN Economic Council.

It is my view that KwaZulu-Natal has the opportunity to reposition itself as the leading and powerful player in influencing economic growth and development in South Africa and the entire continent.

Our Premier Sihle Zikalala will spell out the Programme of Action of this government as we move forward.

In his address, Khuzeni will attempt to answer the following questions.

1. Which province will best ensure that the most vulnerable members of our society are protected from the negative effect of the economic meltdown?
2. Which province will ensure that those who were retrenched are skilled and reabsorbed back to the job market?

Ladies and Gentlemen, in his address our Premier will demonstrate that the answer is KwaZulu-Natal Province.

This is not an arrogant statement but a statement of conviction. I am convinced that working together will help steer this province in the right direction.

By doing so we will be making a strong statement that the KZN Economic Council is relevant today and it will still be relevant tomorrow.

However, the relevancy of this structure will be only be enhanced by our ability to meet the expectations and aspirations for improvements in livelihoods among ordinary people of this province.

Introduction of the Premier.

Programme Director, Khuzeni is a leader who needs no introduction especially to Social Partners and Captains of industry.

Our Premier, is a young, dynamic and energetic leader who has served this country with distinction.

- He is the Co-Chair of the KZN Growth Coalition.
- He became a political activist at a very young age and fought for the liberation of this country.

- He is one of the young people whose vibrancy ushered in this democratic government in 1994.
- As a result of his passion for community development was identified by the community and eventually deployed as a councillor in the late 90s under Ndwendwe Local Municipality. He became the youngest councillor in the whole country.
- He is one of the bravest activists who campaigned for free political activities in Ndwendwe during the difficult times of political violence working with former President Nelson Mandela, Jacob Zuma and many other leaders nationally and in this province.
- Ahead of general elections in 2004 he worked very closely with President Thabo Mbeki and his office to ensure his historic visit to a violent ravaged Ndwedwe.
- He is credited for championing the Radical Economic Transformation in KwaZulu-Natal.
- He has hosted the President of the Republic of South Africa His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa as part of efforts aimed at putting this province on sustained positive trajectory of socio-economic development.
- He is the Provincial Chair of the ruling party, the African National Congress

May we please welcome Mr Sihle Zikalala.