

**OPENING SPEECH FOR THE LAUNCH OF MPUMALANGA EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS SURVEY: EMALAHLENI**

**28 February 2019**

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**Programme Director;**

**MEC;**

**Mayors of Steve Tshwete and Emalahleni Local Municipalities;**

**Members Mayoral Committees of the two Local Municipalities;**

**The Head of Department for DEDT;**

**Distinguished Guests from Various Sectors and Spheres of Government;**

**Members of the Media;**

**Colleagues from both DEDT and Stats SA;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

**Greetings!**

Programme Director;

The key word is ***INFORMATION***.

It is a foundation from which decisions should be made and are often made. Therefore without information decisions would not withstand the test of time.

South Africa is a developmental nation, and as such information is a highly valued commodity. A systematic planning and policy development is extremely dependent on a thorough understanding of the population dynamics and demographics, as well as the socio and economic characteristics of a country. This is a definite point of departure from which we should seek to ascertain the need for a legislative framework that assigns clear accountability

for production of this valued asset, called **INFORMATION**, in this case **OFFICIAL STATISTICS**. It is for this reason that **Legislative Reform** is in the strategy agenda as one of the key priorities of Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), as a statistical production enabler for the foreseeable future.

Information is key to ensure an accurate and thorough implementation of the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&E) as a policy framework for South Africa. The GWM&E derives much of its support from other frameworks such as the Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (FMPPi) and the South African Statistical Quality Assessment Framework (SASQAF).

The National Development Plan (NDP) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set a tone. At various spheres of government, we have accepted the challenge to realise the objectives of these great plans, both in the national and global platforms. We have translated these to the provincial priorities without reservations. The birth of the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path (MEGDP) signified a 10 year commitment by Mpumalanga Provincial Government to create jobs, reduce poverty and inequality in the province. But just how will we know that we have created jobs, reduced poverty and inequality? The question we can't just simply answer. We have to acknowledge the fact that there is a requirement we need to fulfil first; that is a compendium of indicators through which we will be able to measure progress in the implementation of these plans. This takes us to another key priority of Stats SA, the development of an **Integrated Indicator Framework**. This would allow South Africa to fulfil its reporting responsibility on the MTSF, NDP and the SDG, and to input into the GWM&E system.

A progressive state derives its strength in its ability to gather, process, interpret, organize, and present data meaningfully; a mandate legislated to Stats SA through the **Statistics Act no.6 of 1999**. Stats SA has the skill, the resource and the know how in order to achieve or at least narrow the information gap. The ability to harvest and harness the unlimited amount of data generated by various systems does not lie with Stats SA alone. The goal of the South African National Statistics System (SANSS) is to coordinate the production of various statistics, by various producers, either coincidentally or intentionally and to enhance accountability in terms of quality of such statistics. In addition to this important aspect is to minimize

duplication, more so especially in the advent of government-wide budgetary constraints. How do we achieve this? Stats SA, through SANSS has signed Memoranda of Understanding with provincial governments, this so to allow customised agreements such as the one that we have gathered here to launch, the Mpumalanga Employment and Business Survey (MEBS). MEBS is one example of several memoranda of agreements that Stats SA has signed with different partners in the **National Statistics System**, whilst the MEBS agreement is ongoing; some of these agreements have been concluded, such as the Citizen Satisfaction Survey (CSS) with KZN provincial government, completed twice in 2015 and 2018.

We have long witnessed the dawn of information; we have turned the library shelves upside-down in search of books by author names and titles. We have waited for seven days a week for a Sunday paper. We have carried dictionaries just to get proper meanings of terms so that we would be able to construct meaningful sentences in essays, speeches and other writings. The times have changed, we no longer carry information with backpacks and briefcases, we carry information in our pockets because the world has gone digital. Technology has transformed how we see information. Technology has severely reduced the weight of information from kilograms into kilobytes, we no longer carry big books, we carry big data and we carry it everywhere we go. Because of technology, we know more about the world than we did 20 years ago. If we don't know an answer to a question, it has become a norm, we simply just google it.

Stats SA has become an advocate of technology; we are currently hard at work in a transition mode from paper based collection to a computer assisted collection. In the not so distant future, all our fieldworkers will no longer carry paper questionnaires as we fully integrate the digital revolution into our statistical value chain. This promises to cut a lot of logistical challenges and the cost attached to it as well as accelerating the statistical production process by significant margins.

I wish to appeal to all of you to join us in ensuring that we uphold the high data quality standards, it is good data that generates accurate information. It is accurate information that provides for sound decision making, the sound decision making then drives the development agenda with precise conviction.

Stats SA will continue to forge partnerships with interested parties. We will continue to build capacity and most importantly we will strive to ensure that basic statistics reach the planners, it be at national, provincial or at local level. This is encompassed in yet another strategic priority of our organisation, the population **Census of 2021**. This is yet another mammoth task that we all have to join forces for greater coverage and zero undercount.

To the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, it has been a great journey thus far, we are grateful that you have joined us in strengthening the country's statistical system and we look forward to a long lasting partnership in the production of statistical information for the greater benefit of the people of Mpumalanga.

Thank you.