

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY NORTH WEST PREMIER, PROF TEBOGO JOB
MOKGORO, AT THE THIRD MEBALA YA RONA BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE
HELD AT BAKGATLA GATE ON THURSDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2018**

Programme Director,
MEC for Rural, Environmental and Agricultural Development, Mme Manketse
Tlhape,
Kgosi Pilane wa ba Bakgatla ba ga Kgafela kwa Moruleng,
Kgosi Maotwe wa Barokologadi ba ga Maotwe kwa Pitse-di-sule-jang,
Kgosi Matlapeng WA Batlokwa Kwa Ga-Molatedi,
Kgosi Mabe wa Batlhako,
Acting Mayor of the Moses Kotane Local Municipality, Councillor Lawrence
Kapari, accompanied by Councillor Dithothi Tshetlhane
Rre Kenosi Mojanaga wa Omega Game Farm,
Modulasetulo wa Mebala Ya Rona Advisory Committee, Dr Obakeng Mfikwe,
The North West Parks Board Chairperson, DR T.E. Khakhane-Leballo,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,
Bagaetsho dumelang.

I am singularly honoured to be standing before you to speak to this conference on issues that relate to wildlife and biodiversity.

Ladies and gentlemen, ours is a country that is so well endowed with natural beauty that the topography, climate and geology of South Africa make us one of the most biologically diverse countries in the world due to our natural resources' species diversity, rate of endemism and diverse ecosystems.

In addition to this we have the most amazing bunch of people we call South Africans, united in their diversity.

The North West Province is not an exception to the beauty that is South Africa's biodiversity; we are so strategically located as a gateway to Southern Africa but also share a boundaries with the Limpopo, Gauteng, Free State and Northern Cape provinces – that makes us a very unique province that can positively benefit from our geographical location.

This location gives the North West Province a competitive edge over other provinces like Gauteng and Free State when it comes to the actualization of the Biodiversity Economy as well as the benefit that comes with it.

Honourable MEC, it is no secret that the economy of our province is mainly dominated by mining which contributes 30 percent of the provincial Gross Domestic Product (GD), followed by the manufacturing sector at 5 percent and then agriculture at 2 percent.

However, the contribution of the wildlife sector into the economy is integrated into the percentage presented under agriculture.

Therefore Programme Director, with the progressive programmes like ***Mebala Ya Rona***, I firmly believe that, as the North West Province, we are in a position

to positively unpack the percentage of economic growth presented by agriculture to isolate the contribution by the wildlife sector.

In that way, we shall be able to monitor the growth of the sector properly.

Agriculture as a labour intensive sector has huge potential to fight the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

The decision to grow and transform the wildlife sector did not come by mistake; it is because wildlife as a sector matters a lot to us as this government; we should be in a position to align our programmes in this sector with the government's recently announced Economic Stimulus and Recovery Plan to stimulate job creation, eradication of poverty and minimize the growing inequality gap between the haves and the have nots.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is acknowledged that the North West Province is endowed with rich natural resources, but like any other province, it lacks measures and tools for effective transformation of its biological capital into goods and services for social and economic development.

This shortcoming are immensely contributing to the current levels of poverty in the Province.

Thus, one of the key mandates of this department is the protection and enhancement of environmental assets and natural resources through sustainable utilization.

The National Department of Environmental Affairs had previously hosted a National Dialogue on sustainable utilisation of the country's rich biodiversity and further launched the Wildlife economy programme for actualization by provinces.

Thereafter, the North West province launched its maiden Biodiversity Conference in October 2016 and today, this third conference is deliberately aimed at bringing women and youth into the programme.

The reason we are including women and young people in the ***Mebala Ya Rona*** Transformation Programme is primarily because there is a strong link between women and nature and it is therefore not only a romantic or mythological notion.

Women, through their uses of natural resources for building, cultivating, breeding, nourishing and healing, have preserved biological diversity and developed knowledge of possible uses of biodiversity, which have been transmitted from generation to generation, helping to enhance livelihood security.

Despite widespread recognition at the international level that women have an essential role to play as users and managers of biological resources, women's participation in biodiversity-related decision-making processes still remains limited.

Honourable MEC, given the relevance of this issue to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, we have to start talking about factors constraining women's effective involvement in resource management and decision-making.

As matter of fact, ladies and gentlemen, there seems to be little evidence to suggest that women are inherently more conservationist than men.

Nevertheless, as a result of a gendered division of labour across many societies, women and men hold distinct forms of traditional knowledge related to biodiversity.

Therefore, the marginalization of women leads to the marginalization of the knowledge that they preserve, which is indispensable for maintaining livelihood security.

There are several examples of women's involvement as users and custodians of biological diversity.

Women are responsible for the selection, improvement and storage of seeds, and management of small livestock in countries like Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Vietnam, Indonesia and India.

Colleagues, in sub-Saharan Africa, research has proven that women have grown over 120 different plant varieties in small areas alongside cash crops handled by men.

In general, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reports a trend towards the 'feminization of agriculture' prompted mainly by the occurrence of war, pandemics (such as the increasing death toll from HIV/AIDS) and migration of men to urban areas seeking paid work.

As women's population has remained stable in rural areas, their responsibilities in the household for food production have increased.

Nevertheless, women's role as managers is constrained by a series of inter-related socio-economic, cultural and political factors, varying from 'rules of entry' to aspects affecting women's responsibilities after they are included in policy or decision-making forums.

Ladies and gentlemen, one of the factors reducing the efficacy of their intervention is the lack of secure access to land.

It should be noted that women hold titles to less than 2 percent of the world's private land.

Women have little incentive to devote efforts to conservation of resources, as tenure laws in many countries limit their ownership and use of land, thus reducing their opportunity to invest resources and obtain support services.

In many cases, the existence of legal rights still does not guarantee women access to land and to natural resources, where customs prevent them from de facto control.

This has become the case, for instance, in Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso and Cameroon.

Honourable MEC, women's role in the land economy is also limited by their often adverse financial condition, as they comprise 70 percent of the world population living in absolute poverty.

Their situation is further exacerbated by a limited access to credit and related facilities being made available by financial institutions.

Women continue to encounter difficulties in obtaining loans and other means of financial assistance from banks that could assist them in the management of their activities.

Lack of access to education further limits their competitiveness and technical knowledge on biodiversity conservation and sustainable practices.

Ladies and gentlemen, the biodiversity economy is regulated by the public sector and operationalized by private sector with support from academic institutions.

The implementation of the programme requires the Public Private Partnerships approach as well as the continuous development of entrepreneurs, cooperatives and non-governmental organisations.

Research tells us that in South Africa we can still grow conservation and biodiversity economy by 2 million hectares by mobilising private, communal, reformed land for conservation and commercial game ranching.

This is likely to produce 60 000 additional jobs with a contribution of just over R7 billion in equity calculated at almost R4 billion in game and another almost R4 billion in fixed assets.

Therefore, it must be appreciated that the wildlife industry value chain is centred on game and wildlife farming and/or ranching activities that relate to stocking, trading and hunting of game; including all the services and goods required to support this value chain.

While the wildlife sector has not been isolated and not necessarily presented as one of the economic contributors in South Africa, the sector has been growing consistently faster than the general economy, contributing R3 billion to the GDP in 2014.

Of the 9 000 wildlife ranches in South Africa, Limpopo and the North West provinces account for over 50 percent of those.

Our province is also home to the biggest and largest Intensive Rhino breeding programme in South Africa as well as home to 20 private lion breeding facilities.

The most unfortunate thing is that none of these facilities is owned or are being run by women or young people.

This means that we have a lot of work ahead of ourselves to redress this glaring imbalance, 24 years into this democratic dispensation.

Colleagues, our efforts to grow the wildlife sector has multiple benefits starting from creating an opportunity for transformation, tourism growth, processing and healthy eating choices like growing the demand for venison.

The outcome of the Biodiversity and Tourism Lab that was conducted by the National Department of Environmental Affairs in 2016, confirms that game meat revenue grew by 18 percent, while there is still a gap on the export side of game meat.

Currently the demand is more than the supply.

Honourable MEC, given the rural nature of this province, I expect that out of this conference , your Commission on the Training of Magosi on sustainable utilization of communal land under conservation will come with a proposal to

target land in the North West Province that is reformed and developed for community wildlife ranching.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are sitting at a target of 2 million hectares nationally for the purpose of reforming and developing communal land for community wildlife ranching; this province must determine its contribution towards achieving that target.

We have already started as the province to work very closely with our Tribal Authorities hence we have Community Game Reserves like Lebatlane here in Moruleng and many others across the province.

Some communities have opted for the integration of their land into the existing game reserves in the province.

By the way, as the North West, we pride ourselves with 15 Game Reserves which are home to most of our wildlife and critical biodiversity hot spots; which are also Protected Areas.

The Province has had 15 land claims inside Protected Areas and to date, four of the claims have been finalized and co-management agreements have been signed between the North West Parks Board and the Communal Property Associations.

The Pilanesberg Game Reserve has four, Borakalalo Game Reserve has five while Madikwe Game Reserve and the Barbespan Nature Reserve have one CPA each with signed agreements respectively.

In partnership with the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, the Department has identified restitution restored farms to introduce Land Restitution beneficiaries into wildlife economy.

For now, communities that stand to benefit from this project are the four Bahurutshe communities namely:

- Malebelela CPA
- Tshwaane CPA
- Kibusitswe CPA
- Batshweneng CPA

There will be many more as we continue with the programme.

It is of course envisaged that there is a need for skills development and capacity building for new entrants into the industry.

The North West Province prides itself by having launched its Wildlife Academy in Taung.

This is a training facility that will be used to train our communities, CPAs and entrepreneurs to ensure that there is sustainability of our wildlife ranches, bio-prospecting and bio-trade projects.

The first group of youth that was registered for training at the North West Wildlife Academy will be receiving their certificate in Conservation Guardianship on the 7th of December this year.

We, therefore, are looking forward to the full utilization of this training facility by all stakeholders in the province.

We cannot grow and transform the sector successfully if we fail to provide the entrants with the requisite skills to excel in the industry.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you break into various commissions, I expect the one that will be dealing with access to markets to tell this conference as to how will we increase game meat and other products on the shelves and the volumes of export.

As for the regulatory arm of the process, I must say that I applaud the Department for the introduction of the electronic permitting system.

The use of this technology makes our lives easy, however, I plead with you MEC and the departmental officials responsible, that the electronic system must not create nightmares for the new entrants from rural areas who may not have the requisite access to technology.

Let it not be an unnecessary hindrance to them.

I hope the system has an application that can also be accessed through our smart phones.

For me, ladies and gentlemen, access by everyone is critical.

Ladies and gentlemen, it must be appreciated that biodiversity has globally been identified as the cornerstone for economic growth and sustainable development.

As one of the mega-biological diverse countries, this has posed a challenge to us as a country to be able to establish mechanisms in which our biodiversity can be sustainably used to contribute towards addressing the vicious circle of the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality as well as ensure meaningful contribution towards the growth of the economy.

As I conclude Honourable MEC, I would like to reiterate the fact that when we emerge from this conference, we must have targets in terms of what and how much do we plan to contribute in the growth and transformation of the Biodiversity Economy sector.

The aspirations from the National Biodiversity Economy Strategy for South Africa's biodiversity economy is R14 billion GDP contribution at 10 percent per annum by 2030 with 80 000 jobs created.

What target do we commit as the North West Province?

This contribution is not for government as the regulator, it is for private sector and Magosi by contributing communal land for conservation and wildlife ranching activities.

We look forward to Public Private Partnership agreements, mentorship and incubation programmes as well as private sector investment in reformed land.

Ladies and gentlemen, the sustainable utilization of biodiversity, specifically the indigenous biological resources of the country could be promoted and developed through recognition of the contribution of the wildlife and bio-prospecting as well as bio-trade industries.

The bio-prospecting and bio-trade industries encompass organisations and people that are searching for, collecting, harvesting and extracting living or dead indigenous species, or derivatives and genetic material thereof for commercial or industrial purposes while the wildlife industries is centred on game and wildlife or ranching activities that relate to the stocking, trading, breeding, and hunting of game, and all the services and goods required to support this value chain.

It is safe to say in conclusion, Honourable MEC, that this industry is therefore characterised by an interesting combination of agriculture, ecotourism and conservation elements that be positively used to create employment, reduce inequality and eradicate poverty.

I thank you.