



## Still opportunities to grow KZN economy – despite challenges BUSINESS CALLS FOR SPEEDY ACTION



A long line up of KZN MECs gathered for the KZN Economic Council Summit in Durban. They are (from the left): Mxolisi Kaunda, MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison; Bongi Sithole-Mokoi, MEC for Arts and Culture, Sports and Recreation; Sihle Zikalala, MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (representing the government); Nomusa Dube-Ncube, MEC for Corporate Governance and Traditional Affairs; Ravi Pillay, MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works; and Richard Mthembu, MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development.

BUSINESS people planning to invest millions of rands into the KwaZulu-Natal economy prefer "the red carpet to red tape," leading entrepreneur Moses Tembe told the KZN Economic Council Summit.

Tembe is the business sector convenor on the KZN Economic Council and was outlining some of the challenges that investors faced.

He told how one investor was planning to invest billions of rands of development in the Durban area that was likely to create thousands of job opportunities. "But he had been sent from pillar to post," said Tembe.

Another had given a presentation about a multi-billion rand development to the eThekweni Municipality two months ago and had heard nothing further since.

"We are saying, let's go back to basics. We need action and we need to act with speed," he said.

While there had been exceptionally low levels of foreign direct investment into the country recently, Tembe said that there was now a huge international interest from investors wanting to establish industries in KZN.

"Having said that, some of the international investors are looking up to us as business people in the province and saying 'put your money where your mouth is' - a reference to local businesses holding back on investing in the province.

Tembe also said that if the current low levels of economic growth continued, the KZN Economic Council would be unable to address "all the good things" it had proposed for various sectors.

Many people would argue that there were major macro-economic factors beyond their control, which would continue to impact on the growth in KZN, he said.

"But we are saying that while we are in the midst of all these challenges, which by and large are beyond our control, we still have an opportunity to grow our economy."

Earlier, Sihle Zikalala, the KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs called on councils to make land available for investors; setting aside land for specific industries in advance, so that potential developers were not "running around looking for land".

Plans were continuing to set up the proposed provincial One Stop Shop, to make it easier for investors to get the necessary permits quickly, he said.

"Many companies get frustrated (at the delays) and want to see a situation where it does not take years for them to get their permits. We want them to get permits so that they can invest in three months," the MEC said.



Moses Tembe, the business convenor at the KZN Economic Council Summit.

