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KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
PUBLIC WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE
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JOINT MEDIA STATMENT

MINISTER MACPHERSON AND MEC MEYER COMMIT TO DEFENDING SOUTH COAST JOBS, TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOLLOWING COURT-ORDERED DELAY TO COASTAL LEASE HANDOVERS

- A court order obtained by Ray Nkonyeni Local Municipality has delayed the handover of six lease agreements which now threaten economic opportunities, investment and job creation on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast.
- National and provincial government remain committed to ensuring that state-owned coastal properties are managed in a manner that protects public assets and promotes economic growth.
- The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works and Infrastructure will urgently launch the necessary legal process to prevent job losses and tourism loss.

The Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson, and the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Public Works and Infrastructure, Martin Meyer, have reaffirmed their commitment to protecting jobs, supporting businesses and revitalising tourism on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast after a court order was obtained which prevents the handover of six lease agreements for strategic state-owned coastal properties. This action is a direct threat to protecting jobs in the area.

The Minister and MEC have reassured the community that they will stop at nothing to ensure their livelihoods are defended and protected, including those workers that depend on these jobs to put food on the table.

The leases formed part of a joint intervention by the national and provincial departments to restore proper management of state-owned coastal assets and unlock their economic

potential for local communities. Additionally, longstanding concerns exist regarding the management of these properties, including uncertainty around lease arrangements, the underutilisation of state assets, deteriorating infrastructure and missed opportunities for investment, tourism and job creation.

The handover of the six leases was due to take place on the South Coast this week and would have represented a major step towards creating economic activity ahead of the peak festive season. Instead, the process has been delayed by a court order obtained at the eleventh hour by the Municipality.

It is deeply concerning that an intervention designed to unlock economic growth, support local businesses and create jobs has been delayed without either the national or provincial departments having had a proper opportunity to make the necessary submissions to the court during the urgent proceedings. Both departments remain confident in the legality and merits of the intervention and will urgently move to ensure that the full facts are placed before the court.

The Minister and MEC emphasised that the intervention has always been driven by the need to safeguard lives and livelihoods by ensuring that public assets are properly managed, protected from neglect and utilised in a manner that benefits the people of South Africa. Allowing valuable coastal properties to remain underutilised or uncertain in their future management is inconsistent with government's obligation to safeguard jobs, public assets and maximise their economic and social value.

The Departments further noted that this intervention is fundamentally about economic development and job creation. At a time when the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast should be preparing for increased tourism activity, business growth and greater economic participation during the festive season, the delay in bringing these properties into productive use risks postponing opportunities that would directly benefit local enterprises, workers and surrounding communities. It is inconsistent with national and provincial governments objectives of driving inclusive job creation.

The Minister and MEC confirmed that both departments have already agreed on a coordinated legal response and will work together to coordinate its formal response to the order and ensure

that the matter is resolved as expeditiously as possible. A formal cooperation arrangement has been concluded between the two departments to support this process and avoid unnecessary delays.

The focus of government remains on restoring certainty, attracting investment, creating employment opportunities and ensuring that state-owned assets contribute meaningfully to local economic development.

The Minister and MEC further reaffirmed their commitment to engaging directly with businesses, community members and other stakeholders affected by the delay. While the court order has halted implementation, it has not altered government's determination to ensure that these public assets are utilised for the benefit of local communities and contribute to the economic revitalisation of the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast.

The Minister and MEC therefore proceeded with their visit to the South Coast today to engage affected stakeholders and communities and to reaffirm government's commitment to economic growth, job creation, tourism development and responsible public asset management.

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