

**REMARKS BY MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL AFFIARS AND TOURISM, MR. MLUNGISI MVOKO, DURING THE CHRIS HANI REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS CEREMONY**

**08 AUGUST 2023**

**Greetings to you Programme Director, Mr. Ndembe;**

**Leadership from the CHDM, led by Cllr. Lali;**

**Senior officials from DEDEAT, led by District Director Ms. Titus;**

**Senior officials from DRDAR, led by Dr. Dlova;**

**Our partners from the private sector;**

**Educators from the participating schools;**

**Our participants, the students;**

**Esteemed guests;**

**Members of the media;**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Good afternoon.**

Programme Director, it is an absolute pleasure and gratitude to be here today, as we celebrate those that are contributing to the protection of our environment.

We do so during a hive of activities that are building towards the Presidential Imbizo that is scheduled to take place in Tsomo, here in the Chris Hani District Municipality, on Friday 11 August 2023, where President Cyril Ramaphosa is set to lead that outreach programme.

It is also worth to note that the month August is recognised as one of the important dates in the history of the Republic of South Africa as the country pays tribute to women

of 1956 for the role they played in the liberation struggle. History tells us that more than 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria against the apartheid government in protest against the extension of Pass Laws to women. The Provincial Women's Day commemoration is taking place tomorrow in Centani, in the Amathole District Municipality.

I thought I should highlight those events as an attempt to conscientise you all, especially the youth that is here, of the important events that are taking place this month.

Ladies and gentlemen, the hosting of these Environmental Awards Programme resonates with our mandate as the Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT), which is to foster a growing, transformed, diversified and inclusive green economy in a sustainable environment.

It is through this competition that we are able to provide learners with an opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and values needed to protect and improve the state of the environment. It is through this competition that we are giving these learners an opportunity to be actively involved in coming up with solutions on environmental issues

In the main, we want to nurture the participating learners to be ambassadors and stewards of the environment at a young age.

But also, our objective is to encourage schools and educators to play a role in protecting and improving the state of the environment.

I am aware that this programme started yesterday where participants were learners from primary schools, under the theme "**Ecosystem Restoration "Act Now for Present and Future"**". It must have been interesting to listen to what learners of that age had to say on this subject.

For today's competition, I am aware that the participants made presentations under the theme, "**Importance of Renewable Energy in the Fight against Climate Change**".

I must reiterate that this theme is such an important subject in country right now, in consideration of the climate and energy issues that the country is dealing with.

Significantly, I must indicate that Climate Change is one of the high impact projects that we have identified in the Department due to the Eastern Cape's vulnerability to climate induced disasters, as we have witnessed recently. It is therefore imperative that steps are taken to reduce our vulnerability and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

As climate change escalates in priority, it becomes even more important to support our economy with reliable low-carbon sources of energy. Over the next few years we expect significant new investments in wind and solar farms, embedded- and self-generation, green hydrogen and other low carbon sources.

We also know that energy is a foundational pillar of our economy, which is why all forms of new energy generation are so important. Furthermore, the entire sustainable energy value chain has been earmarked as a priority economic sector.

Your participation in this Programme, therefore, means that you become part of the solution to challenge of climate change.

I therefore wish to congratulate all the participants for their contribution in this important conversation in the country. I further wish to congratulate all the winners for their outstanding inputs into the competition.

Whilst the nature of the completion means that there will be winners, I want all those who participated to know that you are all winners, just for being part of this great competition.

I also wish to appreciate the work that has been done by the organisers, our partners and sponsors in the competition, and everyone who played a role in this programme. You have all outdone yourselves.

Thank you very much Programme Director.