

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to address you today, and I want to discuss the Eastern Cape Province's immense potential in spearheading the development of a green hydrogen sector, a fact supported by numerous studies. Its unique combination of resources and infrastructure positions it perfectly for this endeavour.

The Eastern Cape boasts robust wind and solar resources, a network of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) connected to ports, and essential supporting infrastructure. It's a region with all the vital elements in place for the commercial viability of green hydrogen projects, envisioning a job-rich hydrogen economy.

However, I also want to caution that establishing a green hydrogen economy is a complex undertaking. It necessitates meticulous planning and coordination, involving numerous stakeholders and key players. Therefore, well-thought-out support for core hydrogen production programmes is key to fostering industrialisation within a hydrogen-based economy

Realising a Green H2 economy necessitates a collective vision, shared commitment, and active participation from provinces, local governments, institutions, industry, skills sector, and labour.

Also, as the EC government, we are acutely aware of the importance of economic inclusivity and localisation. These are considerations that undoubtedly play a prominent role in shaping government's industry policies and strategies, including those related to green hydrogen. For example, we envision that the development of the EC hydrogen strategy will fully incorporate these elements.

Fortunately, the Renewable Energy IPP Programme sets a valuable precedent. It started with an initial investment in imported equipment and skills, gradually increasing local involvement as market confidence grew. This progress was strengthened by programmes like the South African Renewable Energy Technology Centre, which was supported by international collaboration. Presently, we have achieved over 45% local content in wind and solar energy. We aim to support similar strategies in the green hydrogen sector, contingent upon the policy certainty established by the recently approved National Green Hydrogen Commercialisation Strategy. This approach aligns with the South African Renewable Energy Masterplan and will guide future policies and strategies, capitalising on lessons learned from the renewable energy sector to advance green hydrogen initiatives

As the Eastern Cape Government, we acknowledge the significance of raising awareness and building capacity, forming collaborations with partners like the Hydrogen South Africa (H2.SA) initiative. This initiative, led by GIZ in cooperation with the South African government under The Presidency, reflects our commitment to fostering the green hydrogen sector.

And through this collaboration, we have held workshops such as the Green Hydrogen Policy and Regulatory Framework (held in May this year) and the Renewable Hydrogen Market Potential and Opportunities workshop (held here earlier today), which are playing a significant role in enhancing the technical capabilities of key players. They focus on green hydrogen value chains, business opportunities, and job prospects, aligning with our Provincial Economic Development Strategy's emphasis on value chain development.

Ladies and gentlemen, our green hydrogen pathways and value chains have implications beyond our borders. Collaboration among provinces within South Africa and the broader Southern African region can create synergies, optimise resources, and provide a more competitive service to the global green hydrogen market. A recent Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Northern Cape, Western Cape, and Eastern Cape underscores this commitment to collaboration.

We are convinced that the Eastern Cape is poised to be a central hub for a thriving hydrogen economy. With abundant renewable energy resources, SEZs, and well-integrated ports, we have the foundations in place. The Coega/Ngqura complex, in particular, stands out for its logistics capabilities, and our province's bunkering industry offers further market opportunities. With a strong manufacturing sector and academic institutions contributing to skills and innovation, the Eastern Cape can naturally evolve into a green hydrogen component manufacturing hub.

The pieces of the puzzle are in place. The collective responsibility is to align efforts and create a coherent whole, turning the vision of a flourishing hydrogen economy with ample job opportunities into a reality.

I thank you.