**REMARKS BY KWAZULU-NATAL PREMIER NOMUSA DUBE-NCUBE DURING THE LAUNCH OF WUSHWINI RESORTS ON FRIDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2022, AT WUSHWINI, KWANGCOLOSI**

Programme Director;

Inkosi Bhengu;

Jerry Pooe;

INK Tourism Chairperson, Mel Ntombela;

Former MEC Weziwe Thusi;

Local Councillors;

Traditional Leaders;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

KwaNgcolosi Community Members;

Good evening

Rural economy and development which is driven by tourism go a long way in addressing the rural social ills like poverty, unemployment and inequality prevalent in these areas.

Therefore, it is always a pleasure to launch development initiatives which empower rural communities by providing jobs that help these communities to put food on their tables.

Let me take this opportunity to give praise where it is due. We are grateful to Jerry Pooe for his unwavering belief and commitment to empower rural communities by bringing entertainment and tourism to their doorstep, when it was unfashionable to do so.

Of course, Jerry would not have done this mammoth task by himself – we appreciate the amicable and amiable relationship Jerry has forged with the traditional leadership of KwaNgcolosi.

Such selfless relationships and commitments, which put the welfare of the community ahead of individual gain and enrichment – are highly recommendable.

We hope many entrepreneurs will take a leaf from this relationship which is geared towards rural enrichment and development.

**WUSHWINI IS TOURISTS’ PARADISE**

Located a stone’s throw away from the scenic Inanda Dam, Wushwini Resorts has a lot to offer to local and international tourists.

This place is a hive of activity and haven for entertainment and tourism lovers.

The advent of Covid-19 and its attendant ban on movement of people and events took a heavy toll on places like Wushwini Resorts, which thrive on hosting tourists and events of global stature.

Now that the impact of Covid-19 has dramatically subsided, we are grateful that the resort is back on its feet – just in time for the festive season and beyond.

This is great news for the rural community from KwaNgcolosi, who reap economic spin-offs from Wushwini Resorts.

**ROLE OF TOURISM IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Tourism plays an important role in the economic development of rural areas. Wushwini Resorts is correctly placed to develop the community of KwaNgcolosi because of its proximity to Inanda Dam, as the dam forms part of the iconic Dusi Canoe Marathon Race, which attracts local and foreign tourists.

Apart from the Duzi Canoe Marathon, KwaZulu-Natal hosts many iconic and famous sporting activities like the Comrades Marathon, Amashovashova Cycle Race and many others.

These sporting events attracts local and global participants who would prefer to relax in a rural setting before and after these sporting activities.

We hope Wushwini Resorts will harness these opportunities by providing accommodation to these participants and their families.

This will go a long way in boosting the local economy and that of the province.

Recent statistics from the United Nations point out that by 2050, 68% of the world population will live in urban areas and cities will produce 85% of global economic output, leaving behind a staggeringly high human and environmental impact and imposing a high cost on surrounding rural areas.

This trend contrasts with the fact that 80% of all people living in extreme poverty live in rural communities.

As is always the case, rural youth and rural women bear the brunt of unemployment and economic opportunities.

The UN statistics furthermore reveal that nearly 1 billion of the world’s 1.2 billion youth aged 15-24 reside in developing countries and 88% of youth in developing countries live in rural areas; 75 million of them are unemployed.

Thanks totimely interventions like Wushwini Resorts, local youth and women are benefitting from employment and they also gain important skills on tourism, which has been proven to be a tool for economic development, especially in rural areas.

Tourism in rural areas is beneficial to rural women, who use their hands to create beads and weave baskets which they sell to tourists.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is evident that if we neglect and ignore rural tourism and development, we do so at our own peril.

Rural tourism is the future of economic development and we need to use it wisely for the future development of our province and country.

Once again we take this opportunity to heap praise on Jerry Pooe and the local as well as traditional leadership of KwaNgcolosi for ensuring that development reaches rural areas for the sole benefit of these areas.

As we launch Wushwini Resorts today, we are positive that it will continue to put the rural area of KwaNgcolosi on a world pedestal.

As Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal, we welcome the launch of Wushwini and we wish you all the best for the future.

Thank you, Siyabonga.