

DEBATE ON 2010 FIFA WORLD CUP

UCDP : HON MN MATLADI

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Obvious to everyone is the excitement that's been generated by the hosting of 2010 FIFA World Cup which is probably good for sports lovers and for the nation's morale. However, for realists, the event leaves bad taste in our mouths. The government has spent R34 billion to host an event that was expected to attract 450 000 spectators and the number has now dropped to 250 000. Can our conscious's justify such a huge capital spending when we could not measure returns in real terms?

This would probably be termed 'crying over spilt milk' or a rhyme of sceptics. We planned for this event for years, but what have we planned as an 'after the event'? If we are to see this huge capital spending as an investment, we must therefore have concrete plans on meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE). In the end, the lasting legacy of this event in terms of jobs and economic growth is the spin off derived by key industries like MICE.

There's little or no evidence of plans that will ensure that this event will be used as a catalyst to ensure that South Africa becomes a MICE destination. This is disappointing as planning to host international meetings, conferences and exhibitions should be an important element in government planning for sustainable development.

Let us not be too happy to host the event and neglect to plan for life after the 2010 FIFA World Cup, that would be such a shame.

Lastly, I take this opportunity to congratulate our national team, Bafana Bafana on their performance in the last four matches, we are all behind them with confidence that they'll do us proud.