

DEBATE ON VOTE NO 34: TOURISM

UCDP : MATLADI MN

TUESDAY, 4 MAY 2010

UCDP would like to take this opportunity and congratulate Mr Kingsley Makhubela and the Department for his appointment as Director General for this Department. His credentials speak very well of him, and we hope that he will indeed focus his expertise towards ensuring growth for the tourism industry. We also congratulate the Department for their unqualified audit and wish that they shall continue to set such an example.

Tourism has been identified as one of the key economic sectors with excellent potential for growth. It is also the only sector nationally that has managed to grow jobs while increasing its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP). However, on the bigger scale it still continues to benefit the previously advantaged minorities. Issues of infrastructure in rural provinces mean that Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal continue to be the provinces targeted by tourists and the majority of our people are not in these big cities.

The well written annual report that the Department has produced makes no emphasis on rural development. The 2010 Soccer world cup hype that has been created and publicised to mean great returns for the tourism industry, mean absolutely nothing for the rural communities. The mere mention of 236 projects linked to rural development is a spat in the face when no sustained cash flow will be injected to rural communities.

Rural accommodation cannot and should not be graded on the same scale with accommodation in developed cities with all necessary infrastructure unless the intention is to perpetuate exclusions. It appears that the grading standards of Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) have systematically excluded Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise (SSMEs). Training thousands of SMME's and not equipping them with necessary resources to make them functional and sustainable, equals to a 'tick in the box' exercise and is a spat in the face for individuals and communities that need real empowerment in real terms.

The department needs to concretise its relationships with other departments particularly the Department of Transport, as transport remains the biggest impediment to attracting tourists into rural heritage and tourism spots.

The UCDP supports the budget vote.