



Speaking notes for Mr Fish Mahlalela, Deputy Minister of Tourism during the EDP WIT graduation ceremony at Unisa in Pretoria

24 November 2022

Programme Director

Prof Nellie Swart - Associate Professor at UNISA

Prof Pumela Msweli – Executive Dean and CEO: UNISA SBL

Ms Zukiswa Quagraine – EDP WIT Graduate

Esteemed Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me express my profound gratitude for being accorded the privilege to address you today at this prestigious graduation ceremony, as we all congratulate students who completed the Executive Development Programme for Women in Tourism for the 2019 and 2021 academic year.

Programme Director, it is indeed a heartfelt appreciation for being part of this auspicious event as we continue to celebrate outstanding performance especially from dedicated and determined women against all odds.

Let me from the outset extend our gratitude to the leadership of UNISA for their partnership with the Department which resulted in this Executive Development Programme for Women in Tourism.

Our efforts to drive transformation in the tourism sector that is aligned to the targets set out in the BBB-EE Tourism Sector Code and the UNWTO Sustainable Development Goals will be in vain, if we fail to facilitate access to business resources, information and opportunities for capacity building for women in tourism.

As government we have always revered the heroic contribution of women in the liberation struggle and to focus the attention of the nation on the rights of women and to assess how far we have come as a nation on the journey towards women empowerment and gender equality.

In 2011, our Department conducted a study to assess the state of transformation in the tourism sector. The study found that there was a low percentage of women at Board and Executive management level positions, especially in large enterprises.

Within the tourism sector, women make up nearly 70% of the workforce. However, there is a marked under-representation of women in senior management positions.

The study found that women hold less than 40% of all managerial positions, less than 20% of general management roles and between 5-8% of board positions. The low percentage of women at board and executive management positions was attributed to unavailability of women managers with the required academic profile in the sector.

To address the challenges mentioned above, the department as guided by the Tourism B-BBEE Charter Council, now the Tourism Transformation Council of SA, intervened by embarking on a training programme to close the expressed capacity gap.

The Department, in partnership with UNISA, developed and customised an Executive Development Programme to train women managers in the tourism sector. The content of the programme was designed to cover the accommodation, hospitality, travel and other related tourism sub-sectors.

The objective of the programme is to ensure that senior female leaders in the tourism industry are able to overcome leadership challenges by developing and directing innovative organisational strategies in a complex environment.

The University of South Africa's School of Business Leadership was therefore appointed to implement the programme on behalf of the Department. UNISA developed and customised an Executive Development Programme to train women managers in the tourism sector and its value chain.

The project advisory committee comprised of relevant stakeholders was established to facilitate proper management and implementation of the programme.

To date, a total of about 120 students have been trained through the programme and 87 have completed the programme. This is about 73% qualification completion rate over the years. The department spent about R8 million was on the programme over the years.

The women that have participated in the programme have come from all nine Provinces. The participants came from the various sub – sectors within the tourism sector such as the car rental, restaurants, tour operators, accommodation, travel agencies, events and exhibitions and airline sub-sectors.

The Fourteen students were promoted to senior management since completion of the programme. One student started her own business, providing hospitality services like hostesses, and waitrons for events and travel Stokvel.

The women graduating today are part of the 2019 and 2021 intakes. The 2019 group could not have a physical graduation ceremony due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hence they are part of this ceremony. The programme was not implemented in 2020 due to the Covid - 19 pandemic. In total Thirty-nine students will be graduating today.

There have not been any promotions received by any student from this intake. Understandably so that they completed the programme at the time when the industry has been hard hit by the pandemic and is still trying to recover from the negative effects, where many jobs were lost during this time.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all the stakeholders that made the programme a success. I specifically want to thank CATHSSETA, for making a financial contribution to the 2018 intake. I further want to thank private tourism businesses/employers who supported the programme and released their women workers to participate in the EDP WiT.

I believe that as I conclude with the great partnership we have with noble institutions of higher learning like UNISA this programme will continue to inspire many women from all walks of life.

I wish all of the best to all who will be certificated today.

I thank you