

PRESIDENT SPEAKING NOTES: MR. IKANENG OUPA PILANE
KLCBT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
13 June 2018

Programme Director

Our Guest Speaker: Mr. Victor Bridges from Mobipaid

My fellow board and committee members

Honored Members

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

Members, as I reflect on my two years in the role as President of KLCBT, I believe we have become stronger as an organisation. Our policy advocacy, in my view, is second to none. We manage to retain our membership base, but still have a challenge to widen it to attract black owned companies. We have to go out of our way to attract them to our organisation. The incoming board may have to conduct research to ascertain their needs are and how best we can meet them. We cannot continue as we are, we need to go out of our way to integrate our communities. The current racial tensions in our country are symptoms of exclusion and poverty. We are viewed as privileged organisation representing one segment of our community and not representing the interest of everyone.

This is not just an equity issue, it is a productivity issue, it is thee issue that is threatening our rainbow nation. In a country with poor productivity performance and a young demographic, we cannot have half of the potential workforce denied the opportunity to participate to the maximum of their potential.

I am also proud that we have reached out to other business organisation through the Alliance of Business to strengthen our business relationships. However that relationship is again I my view not yielded much results as those organisations lack the required resources and skills to run and manage business organisation. We need to reach out more and reposition ourselves to look outwardly and I strongly believe that this will benefit our business organisation in the long run. Believe you me, members; there is strength in colour.

There is no doubt that we are going through serious economic and social challenges, I believe in many ways that our country and our district in particular has gone backwards. Perhaps it would have gone further backwards without our endeavours, especially in the area of tourism destination marketing. I am also pleased with the renewed optimism since the election of our new President “Thuma Mina” Cyril Ramaphosa.

We are facing serious infrastructure challenges in this region like the rest of the country, our roads are in a terrible state, including water, sewer and electricity infrastructure that are under a lot stress and ageing, with no maintenance plans in place. We have seen a collapse if not a total collapse of our municipalities. We continue to see an increase of service delivery protests affecting our major tourists routes, which have a detrimental effect on our ailing economy.

Most concerning, we are losing our competitiveness on many fronts and there is no good reason for that as except that our key player which is government in this case, is not coming to a party. There is no doubt that our province and in particular our district has an unparalleled opportunity for prosperity, especially in the tourism, agriculture and manufacturing front.

These challenges may dampen our spirit but I believe we have every reason to be optimistic about our future. However, we are going to have to work for it. There are no free kicks in the modern world. I genuinely fear that without real effort, we will squander our advantages and our extraordinary opportunities.

At every level of government and business, we need to refresh our approach to industry policy and conduct in order to back our many strengths. What’s required is the kind of an inclusive out of the box thinking on how best we can work together as various stakeholders to turn around our district to be an example to the rest of the country and the world.

There is no doubt that Mpumalanga Province is one of South Africa’s most attractive and top tourist destinations. The Lowveld – Ehlanzeni boasts of extraordinary beauty that can be matched by few regions in the world. Scenic mountains, panoramic passes, valleys, rivers, waterfalls and forests are a simple characteristic the landscape of the Lowveld-Ehlanzeni. The iconic Kruger National Park adding another must see offer with its sanctuary of wildlife coupled with dozens of different species of birds and flora. The

cherry on top is the tapestry of its indigenous cultures and the warmth of its people.

However, if the region or district chooses to stay where it is currently, it will not only have an impact on the quality of life for residents but also negatively impact on inward investment opportunities in the economy. Currently we all have not workable plan that is inclusive of all stakeholders.

Therefore, to realise its full potential in an increasingly competitive market, the Ehlanzeni District needs to reposition itself as a Destination but this will require a joined up approach and a significant change of culture.

There is a need to create a common sense of purpose and strategic direction amongst private and public sector interests for an integrated management of Ehlanzeni as a tourism and investment destination. This will assist in governing its development, which requires integrative planning, meaning analysis of the destination, vision, goals, strategy formulation, operative plans, control and evaluation of both achieved and not achieved results with the intention of encouraging stakeholders to work together for the overall benefit of the visitor economy; increasing job opportunities for local residents; transformation of our economic sectors and developing facilities, infrastructure, services and events for visitors and residents to enjoy.

We are currently in conversations with various stakeholders on how best our district can be managed as a destination of tourism and investment that would see an increase in people coming to visit and doing business in our province.

We need a shared economic vision, inclusive of all our communities and government. I believe that KLCBT with its resource knowledge of its members is best suited to initiate this process.

We might have to relook at the current mandate of KLCBT and may need to extend its offerings to be in line with development and training. This could be done through partnerships with our stakeholders. Failure to do that we may end up not being relevant to the broader society we are seeking to attract. We cannot always rely on government; we have enough evidence on what they can do to a thriving economy at the same time we need to strengthen our relationship with government by presenting to them models and strategies that can move us forward. We hope that through our

suggestions will come up with what we call “*Ehlanzeni Destination Economic Action Plan for Enduring Prosperity For All*”, that will address silo planning and ensure maximum deployment of scarce resources and benefit all sectors of our communities. This plan will need to focus on:

1. EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS:

Building new kinds of partnership working across public and private sector interests to deliver the district’s vision and mission.

2. PROMOTION & MARKETING:

Promoting the Ehlanzeni distinctive image and offering to strengthen existing and attract new, year- round growth markets.

3. VISITOR EXPERIENCE:

Providing an exceptional visitor experience that creates lasting positive memories and compels visitors to return and recommend the our district to others.

4. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT:

There is no doubt that our offerings are tired. We need products and experiences on our side of the world including promoting township and rural tourism experiences. In line with market needs and opportunities create a positive environment for investment and reinvestment in product development.

5. RESEARCH INTELLIGENCE AND TRAINING:

Creating and maintaining a strong programme of market intelligence gathering on which to base strategy and measure achievement. To also train our people to provide world class service in our spirit of Ubuntu.

Program Director

This region needs new inflows of money to sustain all the other industries that are doing business in our province. There is no doubt in my mind that by increasing the visitor economy we increase the demand of goods and services that are supplied by all our member industries.

Perhaps the biggest challenge right up-front is having the all of us including government and our communities come to terms with the seriousness of our situation and accept the need for reform. As a people we need to understand that which we need to confront is for the benefit of our nation, and need to understand that we can’t keep kicking the can down the road, we all at some point have to pick it up. Business, like the broader community, has developed an over-reliance on government. It is time we lead on this important front of the economy and business is better placed to do that.

I want to conclude with some heartfelt thank-yous. The people I've been surrounded by and supported by have blessed me in this role, a board that is committed and focused, committees chaired and supported by people with great expertise and vision who freely give up their valuable time. A remarkable secretariat led by Ms. Linda which has worked so hard and so brilliantly during my term. No request was unanswered and there is a high standard of professional excellence in everything they do.

I often wish people could be flies on the wall in our meetings, and hear the conversations – the intellect, the wisdom and the dedication to national interest. That's what this organisation is about. It is not a social club. It's a place people come to contribute their knowledge, their experience and their imagination to making our country an even better place. We talk about the importance of innovation and that is true but, ultimately, the great business transformations and the great societal transformations have been the product of imagination and the capacity to turn dreams into reality.

It's what I admire most about the KLCBT and its members – their preparedness to imagine the future and their capacity to chart and explain a path to get there.

I fear that my words may come across as negative. So let me be absolutely clear ... I know we can do the things, I've talked about and my confidence in the average South African is rock-solid. I have a great feeling about the future. My confidence in KLCBT and the positive influence you'll continue to have is equally solid. As this is my last AGM to address in my capacity as President of KLCBT, It has been an absolutely enormous honour to lead this organisation. I will continue to play a role as a member of this progressive organisation. Thank you for the opportunity.

May God Bless you, May God Bless our business and May God Bless KLCBT.

I Thank You.