

MEDIA RELEASE

26 May 2016

BORDER KEI BUSINESS WANTS MARITIME REVENUES

Despite boasting a massive 800km of coastline, and three ports, including two industrial development zones, the Eastern Cape is yet to cash in fully on a drive by the South African government to energise South Africa's "blue" or maritime economy.

Speaking ahead of the Eastern Cape Maritime Summit to be hosted in Buffalo City during October, Border Kei Chamber of Business CEO Les Holbrook said it was imperative that the city business and government leaders move together to secure investment in the sector or face the prospect of being marginalised.

While President Jacob Zuma during an Operation Phakisa report back in Eastern Cape in April, said more than R17 billion and 4500 jobs had been unlocked in the national economy since the launch of Operation Phakisa less than two years ago, Holbrook wants to see tangible benefits in the area.

"As a collective we need to lobby national government and its support agencies for the distribution of incentives, infrastructure and resources in the vast rural areas, including Wild Coast, connected to the East London harbour and IDZ," he said.

"The development of port infrastructure and efficiencies are central to maritime economic stimulation, as is the continued growth of the East London IDZ within the Border Kei region. While these major players will continue to facilitate opportunity, the private sector is required to partner them by grasping incentives and scanning the economic landscape for business opportunities", said Holbrook.

Speaking at the inaugural Eastern Cape Maritime Summit in Port Elizabeth in November last year, South African Maritime Safety Association CEO Tsietsi Mokhele said "the Eastern Cape was slow moving with respect to the opportunities around Operation Phakisa and yet had the most compelling case for maritime investment and growth as the only province with 3 ports and 2 IDZs. "

The Eastern Cape Maritime Summit to be hosted at The Venue at Hemingways in East London during Transport Month, October 26-28, will seek to make seemingly elusive opportunities more accessible and bring clarity in the areas of how government and business can work together.

It will do this through a conference attached to an exclusive exhibition, where industry leaders will share global best practices and case studies on projects and city-wide initiatives, which Buffalo City and its wild coast neighbours could seek to emulate.

The Eastern Cape Maritime Summit is an annual event, hosted under the auspices of the Border Kei Chamber of Business, Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber and Maritime Cluster with the support of Transnet and the Eastern Cape Provincial government.

"The summit then allows partners in government and business, large and small to "look at" and critically assess how the region can join those that have successfully created new business or boosted existing business in the ocean economy. What is clear is that this region can no longer stall its approach, lest others snatch opportunities from in front of us," Holbrook said.

A study conducted by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University indicated oceans around the country were estimated to have the potential of contributing R54 billion to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and an estimated 316 000 jobs.

South Africa is one of the top 15 shipping countries in the world in terms of the tonnage transported to and from its ports. This presents significant opportunity in the movement of goods, ship repair, ship chandlers and others services.

Entrance to the exhibition is free to pre-registered trade delegates, scholars and students. More information is at www.maritimesummit.co.za

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