

**OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE WATERBERG  
DISTRICT MEANDER**

**24 MARCH 2010**

**TELEKISHI**

Programme Director,

The Mayor of Mogalakwena Municipality,

Councillors present,

Honourable Magoshi,

The Chairperson of the Waterberg Biosphere,

Senior Managers from both Government Departments and  
Municipalities,

Community Based Organisations,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

**THOBELA, GOOD DAY, AVUXENI!!**

It is an honour and privilege for me to address this important gathering in the history of our times. Today we are here to witness the dawn of the era that will contribute to the success of the Waterberg District in particular.

We are here to witness the launch of the Waterberg Meander which is an initiative whereby previously disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and communities were integrated into the tourism industry through skills training, business expansion and new business development.

It is really pleasing to be part of this exciting development and experience.

The Waterberg Meander is a 350 km route situated on and near the Waterberg Plateau, home to the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve.

It was chosen as a tourism development project because it combines three of the most pressing development challenges facing the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve.

Programme Director, as you are aware the Waterberg Mountains of South Africa, are located in the South and West of the Limpopo Province against the Botswana boarder of the Tropic of Capricorn. This is an area of great natural beauty where the environment is protected by massive buttresses and deep forested valleys. It is this remoteness that attracts visitors from all over the world to experience the drama and beauty of the African Bushveld.

The Waterberg with its great variety of wildlife, birds and scenic splendour is one of South Africa's prime eco-tourism destinations. Game and nature reserves and an extensive biosphere combine to conserve an area of over 14 500 square kilometres of mountain terrain.

The Waterberg is a sparsely populated region, much of the area unsuited to agriculture or even human habitation and yet it was here that scientists uncovered the remains of *Australopithecus Africanus*, who lived and hunted in the mountains over 2,5 million years ago.

It is the Waterberg where today, chrome, lead, iron ore, tin, nickel and platinum are mined, mostly on the periphery of the mountains, provide much needed revenue to the economy of the region. Coal mining in the area of Lephalale has also culminated in massive economic growth within the region.

Programme Director, the granting of UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status to large swatches of the Waterberg plateau is recognition of the area's environmental importance and conservation potential. The future of the conservation revolution in the Waterberg lies in the outcome of a number of potentially conflicting processes.

The demand for unfettered wilderness spaces will continue to grow as humans experience the ever increasing pressures of industrialisation.

The Waterberg District is the danger of being seen by many ordinary citizens as an island of wealthy privilege where the value is placed on wildlife, and biodiversity is greater than that placed on confronting unemployment and poverty. The challenge is to ensure that local people benefit from the growing tourism industry. That is why we are encouraging the involvement and or participation of previously disadvantaged communities in our Community Tourism Associations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, People of Waterberg are like the legendary of the mountain. The mountain people, fight the mountain to win their place on the mountain, once they conquered the mountain, they protect it. They become as firm as the mountain in their commitment to development.

The President of the republic of South Africa Cde. Gedleyehlekisa Zuma during his State of the Nations Address stated that *“2010 is a year of Action”*

It is indeed a year of action where remarkable actions take place on a daily basis.

We are here today, joining hands with LEDET for the official launch of the Waterberg Meander Project which to me is a pleasing tourism development and economic growth in the history of Waterberg.

We are in an endeavour to raise the profile of the reserve so that people visiting this area are aware of its international status, philosophy, rich environment, archaeological and cultural heritage.

The Waterberg District's tourism potential and current product strengths place it amongst a “*must visit*” destination which offers unique visitor experiences.

We are quite aware that tourism is a growing industry in our district and therefore there is much more that we could do to enhance our tourist's pleasurable experience.

We all believe that the attractions in the district will present an ideal investment location or an unsurpassed leisure and recreational opportunities. We align ourselves to the Manifesto of the African National Congress by striving to provide quality, affordable and financially sustainable services, thereby promoting economic development initiatives, creating jobs and a better life for all through tourism investment.

Finally Programme Director, the new and growing economic product in the Waterberg District is tourism, where opportunities are offered for visitors to engage with, learn from and in some cases work with local communities in an authentic rural setting.

I therefore take this opportunity once more, to thank all of you for coming to witness this august and memorable event here today. We also thank the support and initiatives by all stakeholders involved in the launch of this gigantic project.

***“TOGETHER WE CAN BUILD A PROSPEROUS WATERBERG DISTRICT - WE ARE INDEED ON THE GO FOR GROWTH”***

***KE A LEBOGA!***