

More state coastal properties to stimulate economic development in smaller towns

Public Works Minister TW Nxesi has assured local small businesses from the coastal provinces that are set to get three new small harbours - that they will be at the centre of the development of these harbours.

He was speaking in East London 29 March 2017 - during the National pre-laboratory consolidation meeting of Oceans Economy: Small Harbours and State Coastal Properties.

The day-long gathering, hosted by the National Department of Public Works' Small Harbours and State Coastal Properties Development Unit - brought together officials from relevant municipalities; national government departments; 4 coastal provincial governments; various entities and private agencies.

The delegates reflected on their partnership with the National Department of Public Works - who is the owner of a lot of properties inland and in the coast. The municipalities running the coastal areas exhibited state-owned coastal properties identified for development and revealed how they wanted these developed. The event also sought to get the involvement of the private sector in the programme to develop small harbours and state coastal properties.

Minister Nxesi said the development of the three new small harbours in the Northern Cape (Port Nolloth); Eastern Cape (Port St Johns) and KwaZulu Natal (Port Edward) provinces would assist to formalise the marine activities in these small rural areas, including fishing, mining and aquaculture farming.

He said his department's establishment of the Small Harbours and State Coastal Properties Development Unit in 2015, coincided with a major presidential initiative - Operation Phakisa: Oceans Economy Unlocking the Economic Potential of South Africa's Oceans. "We are participating in the presidential programme as the Small Harbours and State Coastal Properties Development Unit," said Minister Nxesi.

The Minister mentioned that all national companies who have submitted business and project proposals for this Small Harbours Development programme should indicate their willingness to avail up to 49% share ownership to interested local small businesses and co-operatives. This statement was welcomed with thunderous applause from the audience.

He added, "with regards to fishing related business investments and projects, pro-rata shares must be given to local fishermen based on the total value of the fishing rights per annum."

Minister Nxesi said he believed they would be able to solicit funding for provincial and municipal priority projects which, in turn, would contribute to improved socio-economic conditions, and provide sources of revenue for the municipalities as well as the individual community members.