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Address by the Executive Mayor, Cllr. Dada Morero at the Public Sector Stakeholder Breakfast - 18 September 2026

“Building an Enabling Environment for Entrepreneurship: The Role of Local Government in Driving Inclusive Economic Growth”

Programme Director

Deputy Minister in the Presidency, Hon Nonceba Mhlauli

Deputy Minister of Small Business Development, Hon Jane Sithole

Member of the Executive Council, Hon Vuyiswa Ramokgopa

Representatives of Kore Business Solutions

Nedbank Leadership

Distinguished guests from the Public Sector and Private Sector

Academia

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

I stand before you at a defining moment for our city. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to spend time with practitioners of the informal economy at the University of Johannesburg in Soweto, during the Gauteng Spaza Shop Summit organised by the City's Department of Economic Development. This engagement confronted the elephant in the room facing the informal sector, most notably spaza shops: the barriers to entry that prevent the informal economy from entering the business market and mainstream economic space—what I call the political economy of space.

Just recently, the City of Johannesburg's Mayoral Committee and administrative leadership sat down with officials from the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition to begin shaping what we are calling the Joburg Economic Growth Strategy, a plan built on one conviction: that Johannesburg is not just South Africa's economic engine, but the heartbeat of Africa's economy. When Joburg grows, the continent feels it. When Joburg stumbles, the ripple reaches every capital that trades with us, banks with us, and builds with us.

That conviction is not rhetoric. It is a responsibility. I am delighted that this public sector breakfast has convened exactly the right room: government, business, academia, and development partners, because no single sphere can carry this growth alone.

At that workshop, the DTI presented several transformation imperatives, anchored in what is called the Butterfly (Export) and Industrial Development Strategy — a national strategy that closely mirrors our City's economic landscape.

Picture two wings, joined at a single body. One wing represents our established economic base — finance, business services, logistics, and manufacturing — the sectors that have long carried Johannesburg's GDP. The other wing represents the sectors we must now deliberately grow: the green economy, the digital and technology sector, and the township and informal enterprise economy that sustains most residents' day-to-day.

Two wings, but one body, and that body is industrial policy. Without a deliberate, coordinated industrial development strategy holding both wings together, we do not have balanced flight; we have a city lurching from one uneven cycle of growth to the next. It is my considered view that this Strategy commits to ensuring Johannesburg's growth does not favour one wing at the expense of the other, and that our established and emerging industries rise together, on the same infrastructure, in the same regulatory environment, and with the same enabling state.

This is also, quite deliberately, a strategy of transformation. A butterfly does not simply grow; it undergoes metamorphosis. That is the scale of change we are asking for in Johannesburg's economy: not incremental improvement, but a genuine transformation from a spatially divided, unevenly performing city economy into one that is integrated, industrialised, and inclusive.

This morning, I want to speak candidly about the role local government must play in making that transformation real — not as a regulator standing between the entrepreneur and their ambition, but as the enabler that clears the path. Four things define an enabling environment, and they are the four pillars we are placing at the centre of our growth strategy:

First, local economic development. We are moving away from generic support and toward sector-focused development, backing the industries where Johannesburg already has comparative advantage, while consciously building the capacity of the sectors on our second wing.

Second, investment attraction. Capital goes where it is welcomed and safe. That means predictable regulation, faster approvals, and a city administration that treats every investor, whether a multinational or a spaza shop owner, as a partner, not a supplicant.

Third, infrastructure. Roads, power, water, and digital connectivity are not backroom utilities; they are the physical conditions of enterprise. An entrepreneur cannot build a business or infrastructure that fails them. At its heart, our infrastructure investment plan is an industrial development plan.

Fourth, service delivery. Every delayed permit, every misbilled account, every unanswered query is a tax on someone's ambition. Restoring the basic competence of municipal service delivery is one of the most powerful economic interventions this administration can make.

This is why our engagement with the DTI is significant: a city-level growth strategy aligned with national industrial policy — and, ultimately, with continental frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area — positions Johannesburg not merely as South Africa's largest city, but as a genuine gateway for trade and investment into the rest of Africa. We intend to claim that position deliberately, not by accident of geography.

I say this to everyone in this room: government will set the conditions, but you will build growth—the entrepreneurs, financiers, developers, and institutions in this room. That is why forums like this one matter. We need honest engagement across the three spheres of government and our strategic partners, because inclusive growth is not a slogan we can legislate into being. It is a partnership we must negotiate, sector by sector, project by project.

Programme Director, in closing, I want to assert that Johannesburg's next chapter will be written by the choices we make together in rooms like this one. I am committed, as your Executive Mayor, to ensuring that local government — particularly Johannesburg — is not an obstacle to that ambition, but its most reliable partner, carrying both wings of our economy forward, together.

Let us build the enabling environment our entrepreneurs deserve and let us do it as the heartbeat of Africa's economy should — with urgency, with partnership, and with pride. Thank you.