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MPUMALANGA HOSTS G20 GPMI SECOND PLENARY

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe and Kopano Dibakwane

Delegates attending the G20 GPMI (Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion) second plenary meeting, held at the Nombolo Mdluli Conference Centre in Skukuza(Kruger National Park), were warmly welcomed to the province by Mpumalanga MEC for Finance, Bonakele Majuba.

The plenary meeting was attended by the G20 executives and invited countries, as well as international organisations, to discuss various issues related to the urgent necessity for overall financial inclusion.

Majuba said, leveraging technology to bridge the global divide and utilising global partnerships to enhance access to and use of

financial products and services, can be achieved through the expansion of access to network, particularly in rural areas.

“The GPMI priority reflects our shared commitment to an inclusive transition where all people, particularly in developing nations, can have timely and equitable access to appropriate and affordable financial products and services,” said MEC Majuba.

He furthermore reiterated the commitment by government to a financially inclusive agenda that leaves no one behind.

The Deputy Minister of Treasury, David Masondo, who apologised for not attending the meeting in person due to national budget preparations, thanked the GPMI co-chairs organisers. He said the meeting is aimed at shaping a future where financial access translates into usage and meaningful impact.

“Over the past decade, our collective efforts, across G20 countries and elsewhere, have dramatically expanded financial access. Millions of previously unbanked individuals now have bank accounts or mobile wallets. In South Africa, thanks in part to social grants and banking outreach, account ownership is high.

“Globally, the number of unbanked individuals has fallen, though 1.5 billion people worldwide still lack an account, a stark reminder that more still needs to be done.

We have given more people a foothold in the financial system, but now we must empower them to climb. That is why South Africa, as G20 President in 2025, has made; Moving From Access To Usage,” said Masondo.

He added that a dormant bank account is not a pathway out of poverty, as well as a digital wallet that does not send or receive payments, cannot be classified as financial inclusion.

Masondo said that financial empowerment of women plays a pivotal role in shaping and developing communities.

According to Masondo, when women gain access to financial tools and earnings, they invest in their families and communities to an impressive degree.

“Studies find that women typically reinvest 90% of their income back into their households, compared to about 30-40% for men.

We have seen that financially empowering a woman creates a ripple effect; children stay in school longer, family nutrition improves, and local economies become more excellent,” said Masondo.

Other topics under discussion by delegates from all member states included the G20 Action Plan, with focus on innovative technology and solutions for the financial inclusion of individuals and MSMEs(Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) in the global financial sector.



Globally, the number of unbanked individuals has fallen, though 1.5 billion people worldwide still lack an account



Sustainability
G20 South Africa 2025

MTPA shines at Africa travel Indaba

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe

The Mpumalanga Tourism Agency (MTPA) recently participated productively in the Africa's Travel Indaba held at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli ICC (International Convention Centre) in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, showcasing a variety of the province's unique tourism products.

The MTPA was part of a delegation from Mpumalanga, led by the MEC for DEDT (Department of Economic Development and Tourism), Makhosazane Masilela.

Other stakeholders forming part of the delegation included Tour Operators, SMMEs (Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises), Travel Agencies, various officials from the Provincial and Local Governments in Mpumalanga.

MTPA Acting CEO, Justus Mohlala, highlighted the importance of the event in exposing Mpumalanga's products to new markets and generating partnerships. Mohlala equally emphasised that SMMEs were given a vital platform to gain knowledge, carve their space in the tourism industry, and ultimately construct the potential clientele for future business.

"What we are telling the world about Mpumalanga, during this Indaba, is the unique products that we are offering as a province," said Mohlala.

He added that the Mpumalanga Tourism Village provided more information to potential tourists, allowing them to make enquiries for packages, and accommodation.

Tour Operators were also available for a friendly interaction with potential clients who made enquiries about adventure tourism and other tourism-related activities, to assist and entice whoever that wanted to plan their tourism trips to Mpumalanga.

SMME Participation During the Indaba

A special stand was allocated for the province during the Indaba, called Mpumalanga Tourism Village, which featured a variety of outstanding products from SMMEs in the province.

"The motivation to the product owners (SMMEs) is for them to come and explore new markets because this is about venturing into new markets.

We are here to expose their products and ensure that they generate partnerships," he said.

Mohlala encouraged SMMEs to continue developing quality products and marketing them consistently, rather than only focusing on events. He added that the MTPA is available to support and help SMMEs in packaging, grading and developing quality products before they reach the markets.

"As they leave here, they will be



having enquiries from other provinces, the country as a whole, as well as internationally, beyond Africa," said Mohlala.

G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting

Mpumalanga is set to host the G20 Tourism Ministers' meeting in September this year. Mohlala confirmed that the province is ready and preparing to host the event, with weekly meetings being held with stakeholders, including the Minister of Tourism (Patricia De Lille) to ensure a successful hosting.

"Fortunately we have been identified as one of the provinces that will be hosting the G20 Tourism Ministers. As a province we are ready and we are improving our offerings.

We have identified areas where we'll be having those meetings and where we'll be hosting those conferences.

"We are talking to a number of stakeholders on the tourism industry to also open their services to the G20 Tourism Ministers and other tourists that will be visiting Mpumalanga and the country as a whole during September," he said.

MOUs with Tourism Agencies

Some of the notable highlights during the Indaba include the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between MTPA and other tourism agencies, such as the Nkangala Economic Development Agency (NEDA), under the Nkangala District Municipality, and the Limpopo Tourism Agency.

Integrated Tourism Development

The MOU signed between MTPA and Limpopo Tourism Agency is reportedly aimed at creating working relationship to develop integrated tourism initiatives along their shared borders, including the areas of Bushbuckridge and Thaba Chweu (Mpumalanga) and Hoedspruit (Limpopo). According to Mohlala, this collaboration aims to promote tourism and economic growth in the region.

"Ourselves and Limpopo have common characteristics in terms of tourism such as wildlife, as we are both bordering the Kruger National Park.

We also share the same sentiments

in terms of culture from our various communities, as well as scenic beauty.

Our aim is to make sure that where we are sharing borders, we develop those areas so that there will be an integrated tourism development.

"Bushbuckridge is on the panorama route together with Thaba Chweu. Anything that we'll be developing along that belt will be linking well with Limpopo's Hoedspruit, which has been identified as one of the developing notes for Limpopo.

We want to make sure that there's an integration between the two provinces, we aim to make developments that will help to promote tourism along those borders," said Mohlala.

In conclusion, Mohlala said the MTPA's participation in Africa's Travel Indaba and its preparations for the G20 Tourism Ministers' meeting demonstrate the unwavering commitment towards promoting Mpumalanga's tourism industry.

The agency's efforts to support SMMEs and develop integrated tourism initiatives will help to drive economic growth and further promote the province's unique products.

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Nelwomodo facilitating engaging farmers during the workshop.

Mpumalanga farmers learn about climate change

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe

Farmers and various stakeholders came out in large numbers to attend workshops and make their inputs on possible measures to mitigate climate change and its effects on agriculture.

The workshops were reportedly part of the review of the Mpumalanga Climate Change Response (Adaptation and Mitigation) Strategy and Implementation Plan for the Agricultural Sector, recently held in Ermelo, Mbombela, Thulamahashe (Bushbuckridge), and Middleburg, respectively.

According to Mpumalanga DARDLEA (Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs), challenges faced by farmers, including drought, floods, as well as temperature fluctuations as a result of climate change, were extensively discussed during the engagement sessions.

“The workshops emphasised the importance of understanding the impact of climate change on agriculture and identifying adaptation and mitigation strategies. During these sessions they discussed possible measures

to adapt to climate change, such as conservation agriculture, climate-smart agriculture, and irrigation management, amongst others,” said DARDLEA.

Mamadi and Company SA was reportedly appointed to develop the Strategy, and collaborated closely with DARDLEA, CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research), DFFE (Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment), and Urban Earth, in facilitating the stakeholders engagement and workshops towards developing the provincial Strategy.

Madanalo Nelwamondo from Mamadi and Company SA, said farmers in all Mpumalanga Districts played a big role in the work done to develop the Strategy. She thanked them for their earnest participation throughout the process, as they have shared the correct information on issues that are currently happening on the ground.

She added that the issue of capacity building was raised as one of the major focus points for both farmers and Extension Officers.

“This document has been produced based on what they (farmers) have indicated to us through consultations. We are

going to finalise the document in such a way that it will be implemented by the farmers. They’ll be able to know about the mitigation and adaptation measures that they need to use in order for them to improve their farming in different commodities and also to ensure that the agricultural officials can assist them,”

A consultant from Mamadi and Company SA, Dr Joel Ondego Botai, said there was a high presence of adult participants than youth, pointing to the fact that youth ought to be encouraged to enter into agricultural enterprises.

He also said that more subsistence farmers attended the workshops than commercial farmers, as well as more females attending than their male counterparts.

“We point out that knowledge in climate change is generally medium, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation, pointing to the fact that more programmes need to be put in place in order for farmers to have a thorough understanding of climate change impact, and the adaptation and mitigation options that are available for them,” said Dr Botai.

DEDT hosts seminar and exhibition for MSMEs

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe and Kopano Dibakwane

The significant contribution of MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) as well as Cooperatives to the economy, particularly in rural communities and under developed regions, was eloquently highlighted by Mpumalanga MEC for DEDT (Department of Economic Development and Tourism), Makhosazane Masilela, during a seminar and exhibition held at Sabie Town Hall, in the Thaba Chweu Local Municipality, on Monday 19 May 2025.

According to DEDT, the event was geared towards providing MSMEs and Cooperatives with the relevant information and guidance on the non-financial and financial services offered by both government and its implementing agencies.

In her keynote address, MEC Masilela stated that the occasion was part of a crusade by DEDT and the provincial government to

strengthen support for MSMEs and Cooperatives, as well as ensuring that these businesses experience growth through fostering partnerships with the private sector.

“As the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, one crucial function within our mandate is to support MSMEs by empowering and nurturing them. We, therefore, hold the firm view that MSME development remains the appropriate vehicle to drive the economic transformation agenda,” said Masilela.

The MEC also said that the event equally served as a platform that will enable MSMEs and Cooperatives to gain access to full participation in the local and global markets.

A similar seminar was held by Masilela and her delegation at Thulamahashe Community Hall, in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, on 20 May 2025.

In both events, the MEC was accompanied by senior DEDT officials including the HOD (Head of Department), Immy Serakalala, amongst others.



One of the MSMEs displaying their products during the exhibition.



DEDT HOD, Immy Serakalala, and MEC Masilela.



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MEC Manzini (In a Cream Dress, Mayor Mhlonishwa Masilela and officials from the Department of Health.

Mpumalanga Health receives mobile clinic donated by mining

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe and Kopano Dibakwane

“Let’s make Cheka Impilo fashionable”. These were the words of encouragement by Mpumalanga MEC for the Department of Health, Sasekani Manzini, directed towards the males in attendance during the handover of a brand new mobile clinic donated by Arnot Opco to the community of Rietkuil in the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, on Tuesday 20 May 2025. Speaking at the event, MEC Manzini said the mobile clinic will improve the provision of primary healthcare services to the Rietkuil community.

The MEC urged all the community members to adopt the norm of visiting

their nearest health facility for medical check ups, without having to be forced to take action only when a sickness arises.

Manzini furthermore requested the community members to make full use of the mobile clinic, as it provides all the services found in a permanent structure health facility.

“I urge everyone to check their health status. Last week we have launched the Closing the 134 000 HIV Treatment Gap. The objective of the campaign is to put 134 000 people who are HIV positive but they are not on treatment. We want to see every HIV positive person on treatment by December 2025,” said Manzini.

The CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of Arnot Opco, Bontle Aphane, said the working relationship between the public and private sectors plays an important role in improving the lives of communities. She assured the community that the mobile clinic is a temporary solution, and that a permanent clinic is on the cards.

“Arnot Opco is determined to work hard for the benefit of the company and the communities they operate in. Our key priority as Arnot Opco is on health and education,” said Aphane.

The handover ceremony was also attended by members of the local Royal House, amongst other distinguished guests.



MEC Manzini receiving the keys to the mobile clinic from Arnot Opco CEO, Bontle Aphane.

Ten shelters allocated for GBVF victims in Mpumalanga

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe

The DPWI (Department of Public Works and Infrastructure), led by Minister Dean McPherson, has handed over 10 unused state-owned properties to the Mpumalanga Department of Social Development, to be used as shelters for victims of GBVF (Gender-Based Violence and Femicide).

Five shelters will reportedly be allocated to Badplaas, while 4 and 1 will be allocated to Lothair and Delmas, respectively.

Speaking during his visit to Mpumalanga on Monday 19 May 2025 to handover the shelters as well as to host an Infrastructure Imbizo at Nelsville, in the City of Mbombela, Minister McPherson emphasised the government’s commitment to using its properties for public good.

He stated that the properties will be transferred to the provincial government, which will take care of its operational issues such as security, staffing and maintenance.

“The government is the single largest landlord and owner of property across the country. It doesn’t make sense for us to have these properties that often stand vacant and incur costs.

“That’s why we have identified strategic areas, in conjunction with the



Social Development MEC, Khethiwe Moeketsi, alongside DPWI Minister, Dean McPherson in Mbombela.

Minister of Social Development, to make sure that these properties are released and they are in the ownership of the provincial Department of Social Development, and they are used for the intended purpose of providing refuge, dignity and hope to the victims of GBVF,” said McPherson.

Mpumalanga MEC for the Department of Social Development, Khethiwe

Moeketsi, welcomed the 10 shelters donated by DPWI.

She said this gesture supports the work that her department is already doing to ensure that victims of GBVF are provided a place of safety.

According to Moeketsi, Mpumalanga has 23 Women Empowerment NPOs (Non Profit Organisations) and the facilities will

enhance and provide additional support to the victims.

She noted that some of the facilities require renovation and maintenance, but her department will work closely with Mpumalanga DPWRT (Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport) to ensure that the work is concluded swiftly.

“As the Department, we welcome any initiative aimed at addressing the scourge of gender-based violence in the province. Handing over of the government-owned properties will give victims of GBV the strength to regain their dignity and healing,” said Moeketsi.

In addition, she said the Department of Social Development will ensure that the budget allocated by national and provincial governments will be evenly spread to cover all the services provided by the department.

Mpumalanga MEC for DPWRT, Thulasizwe Thomo, commended the DPWI for allocating the 10 state-owned properties, as it is in line with Pillar 2 of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF and ERAP (Emergency Response Action Plan).

“These properties will contribute to the national objective of providing at least one shelter per district, while also supporting the roll out of Khuseleka One Stop Centres for comprehensive victim support,” said Thomo.

SANParks launches groundbreaking Biodiversity

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe

SANParks(South African National Parks) has launched the SANParks Biodiversity Offset Bank, a pioneering initiative that will revolutionise the way conservation and development are approached in South Africa.

The launch event is taking place at the Development Bank of Southern Africa(Midrand-Gauteng Province), from 22 to 23 May 2025, as part of the National Biodiversity Offset Conference hosted by DFFE(Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment) and the UNDP(United Nations Development Programme).

SANParks Head of Communications and spokesperson, JP Louw, said the Biodiversity Offset Bank is a first of its kind, and offers South Africa the opportunity to expand and improve the management of protected areas, assisting developers in meeting their environmental, social and governance goals, while also supporting the stating in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

“The Offset Bank aims to set a national model that other can adapt and improve upon. Biodiversity offsets are a viable and innovative financing mechanism for the expansion and management of our protected areas.



SANBI CEO, Shonisani Mundzedzhi, DG of DFFE, UNDP South Africa Deputy Resident Representative, Gloria Kiondo and SANParks CEO, Hapiloe Sello.

“ SANParks’ collective efforts to finance and secure the future of our nation extraordinary biodiversity is evident by the unique opportunity to expand our protected area network, while at the same time unlocking economic development,” said Louw.

The Offset Bank will reportedly operate within the legal and regulatory framework of the Environmental Impact Assessment regime, ensuring that land purchases

are strategic and beneficial for park expansion.

By building a resilient natural heritage, the Offset Bank will reportedly enable responsible development while securing the well-being of current and future generations.

“ SANParks Vision 2040 is about building protected areas that are sustainable, inclusive and designed to be intentionally beneficial to both

the people and the environment. Its core pillar is the development of mega-living landscapes, expansive areas where conservation catalyses social and economic development.

“The Offset Bank will only be purchasing land that makes sense for park expansion, either forming a conservation corridor, strategic water source area, or critical biodiversity area that is not protected recently,” said Louw.



Nkomazi Municipality Executive Mayor, Phindile Magagula.

Premier meets Nkomazi Mayor to discuss service delivery

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe

Mpumalanga Premeir, Mandla Ndlovu, recently held a meeting with Nkomazi Local Municipality Executive Mayor, Phindile Magagula, at the Makhonjwa Building in Mbombela, to identify areas of improvement and explore ways to support the municipality.

According to Mpumalanga Provincial Government spokesperson, George Mthethwa, both the Premier and Magagula assessed the performance of Nkomazi Local Municipality in delivering services to the community.

Mthethwa said the Premier has pledged his commitment to assist the municipality with revenue collection, as it is owed

millions of rands.

“He indicated that a team of experts from the provincial government will be assembled to support Nkomazi Local Municipality.

Premier Ndlovu further urged communities to pay for services, for the sustainability of local government in Mpumalanga,” said Mthethwa.

The Premier reportedly stated that the same support offered to Nkomazi Local Municipality will also be extended to other municipalities in the province that are faced with similar challenges.

The meeting was also attended by Ehlanzeni District Municipality Executive Mayor, Terra Shabangu, and the Director- General, Maggie Skosana, amongst others.



Premier Ndlovu ready to assist Mpumalanga municipalities.



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MEC Macie condemns recent cases of GBVF in the province.

DCSSL MEC condemns recent cases of GBVF in Mpumalanga

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe and Kopano Dibakwane

The recent growing reports of GBVF (Gender-Based Violence and Femicide) cases in the province are causing sleepless nights for Mpumalanga MEC for DCSSL (Community Safety, Security and Liaison), Jackie Macie.

These cases include the alleged rape of an 8-year-old minor by a 15-year-old boy in Belfast during a school activity, which angered community members, resulting in threats of illegal protests.

Other recent cases of sexual abuse and violence include the alleged rape of a 13-year-old girl in Middelburg on 4 May 2025, an 18-year-old woman in Leslie on 12 May 2025, an attempted rape of a 17-year-old grade 12 learner in Bushbuckridge on 13 May 2025, as well as the gruesome incident in which a 31-year-old woman was allegedly hacked to death with an axe by the father of her children in Schoemansdal on 12 May 2025.

MEC Macie has condemned the incidents and emphasised that tackling

Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) remains a high priority for the government. He said women and children continue to suffer, others silently, in the hands of men everyday.

“We know that there are many more people who continue to be abused behind closed doors. We are therefore appealing to communities to speak out and report these cases. Parents and guardians must be highly vigilant so that they are able to see when their children are abused,” said Macie.

The province has recently established a GBVF Council as part of fighting the scourge

He said the victims and survivors need to be supported as their lives have been forcefully changed by these brutal acts. However, Macie has called upon community members to remain calm and allow law enforcement agencies to do their work without any interference. He urged those with information relating to incidents of GBVF, to come forward and report to the police.

“The province has recently established a GBVF Council as part of fighting the scourge. Our communities must help us by exposing perpetrators. We must actively play a role of better protecting our women and children,” said Macie.

Suspected stolen vehicle recovered in Low's Creek

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe and Kopano Dibakwane

A vehicle, suspected to be stolen, was recovered by police during a stop-and-search operation conducted on the R38 Road, near Shiba Siding Low's Creek, on Tuesday 20 May 2025.

According to Mpumalanga police spokesperson, Lt-Col Jabu Ndubane, a team from a vehicle tracking company arrived during the stop-and-search and alleged that they are tracking a vehicle which, according to their tracking device, appeared to be stationary on the R38 Road.

“The police went to Shiba Siding, searched the area and found the said vehicle parked and abandoned near the road, with the keys inside, and fitted with false registration number, which revealed other vehicles.

“All role players were summoned to the scene and the vehicle was taken to police camp, as it tested positive. It was reported as stolen in Randburg, Gauteng. No arrests made,” said Lt-Col Ndubane.



The alleged stolen vehicle seized by police.

Save Water | Every drop counts



Officials in attendance during the meeting.



Premier Ndlovu, DG Skosana, and three officials awarded for long service.

Premier Ndlovu Emphasises Integrity and Ethical Conduct in Public Service

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe and Kopano Dibakwane

The Premier of Mpumalanga, Mandla Ndlovu, recently addressed a staff meeting at the Office of the Premier (OTP) in Mbombela, emphasising the importance of integrity and ethical conduct in public service.

The Premier emphasised that all officials must strive to be the epitome of good servants, guided by values of integrity and ethical conduct when performing their duties.

According to Ndlovu, the OTP plays a crucial role in guiding all departments in

the province to achieve the priorities of the 7th Administration. He also said the OTP aspires to be the strategic centre of excellence.

Mpumalanga Provincial Government spokesperson, George Mthethwa, said the Premier identified inclusive growth, reducing the cost of living and poverty, building a capable, ethical, and developmental state, as some of these priorities envisioned for the 7th Administration.

“The Premier presented long-service awards to some of the officials, in recognition of their devotion and commitment to public service,” said

Mthethwa.

According to Mthethwa, the Director-General in the OTP, Maggie Skosana, responded to the call raised by Organised Labour, urging the OTP to urgently fill current vacant posts.

“The Director-General said currently the office is recording the thousands of applications received for the 9 advertised positions, and that the shortlisting and interview processes will follow soon.

She said integrity will be the guiding principle, to ensure that people who meet the requirements, are appointed,” said Mthethwa.



Premier Ndlovu urges officials to apply integrity and ethical conduct in public service.

Mpumalanga health celebrated international nurses day

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe and Kopano Dibakwane

The Department of Health in Mpumalanga joined NEHAWU (National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union) to commemorate International Nurses Day at Rob Ferreira Tertiary Hospital in the City of Mbombela, on Wednesday 21 May 2025.

The event was led by NEHAWU President, Mike Shingange, Nyameka Macanda (1st Deputy President), as well as National, Regional and Provincial leaders of the union. In her keynote address, MEC Manzini said nurses are very important team members of the healthcare system, and they must be appreciated and acknowledged.

“Despite the challenges, we acknowledge the good work done by nurses in the provision of quality healthcare services as we continue to uplift and celebrate the nursing profession. The Department will continue to strengthen safety measures in our facilities to ensure that our health workers are safe in their workplace,” said Manzini.

Shingange said, in his address at the function, that the NHI (National Health Insurance), which is aimed at increasing funding and improving the allocation of resources, must be implemented swiftly to strengthen the healthcare system.

“Nurses are more than welcome to be members of the progressive union



NEHAWU President, Mike Shingange, calling for swift implementation of the NHI.



MEC Manzini celebrates the contribution of nurses.



Mpumalanga nurses attending the event.

NEHAWU, and they must continue to uphold professionalism and activism like

the founders of this noble profession. The NHI will assist to enhance training

and development opportunities for public health professionals,” said Shingange.

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Amajita lifting the AFCON cup.

AMAJITA PROUDLY LIFT THE U20 AFCON CUP

Kopano Dibakwane

The South African Under 20 mens' soccer team, affectionately known as Amajita, created a historical moment by winning the AFCON (Africa Cup of Nations) for the first time in a sensational final match against Morocco in Cairo, Egypt, on Sunday 18 May 2025.

The South African team secured a narrow victory by beating the Moroccan team 1-0.

Amajita were initially viewed as underdogs in the early stages of the tournament, but their tenacity and courageous approach paid off eventually.

Amajita fought tooth-and-nail against Nigeria in the semi-finals, which cemented the belief that lifting the AFCON cup was within reach.

The South African side made their intentions very clear in the third minute of the game when they came close to clinching their opening goal, following a defensive error by Moroccan defender Jody Ah Shene.

However, the Moroccan goalkeeper, Yanis Benchaouch, doused the Amajita fire with a magnificent save.

It was not smooth-sailing for South African goalkeeper, Fletcher Smythe-Lowe, who made a number of difficult saves to keep Amajita in the game, as both teams threw arrows back and forth in the first 45 minutes.

The urgency for goals was evident in the opening minutes of the second half, as both teams pressed for a lead.

It was Mamelodi Sundowns reserve midfielder, Gomolemo Kekana, who broke

the deadlock in the 70th minute, firing a long range shot from outside the box and giving Amajita the sweet taste of a pending victory.

The goal was initially ruled as off-side but thanks to a VAR review, the referee reversed the decision and Amajita secured a lead.

In response, the wounded Morocco applied pressure as the game entered the last 10 minutes, but Smythe-Lowe rose to the occasion by keeping the Amajita goalposts secured with a few saves.

The Moroccan side were evidently desperate for an urgent equaliser and tried to overcrowd the Amajita half with a few threatening attempts at goal, but it was little too late to change the scoreboard.

The game ended on 1-0, and Amajita walked away with the coveted trophy as

champions of the tournament.

Amajita Coach, Raymond Mdaka, congratulated his team for representing the country well throughout the challenging tournament and thanked his technical team, as well as the numerous messages of support sent to the boys by ordinary South Africans.

He said the DDC (Dstv Diski Challenge) must be credited for refining young amateurs into future superstars of South African football.

"We need to put more focus on the development again, because that's what can take us somewhere in terms of our football. I salute the DDC because it made it easy for us to be able to see the players week in and week out. If it wasn't for the DDC, we wouldn't be able to see these players," said Mdaka.