

International Migration Workshop

The Minister for Small Business Development Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, participated in the International Migration Workshop that was held at Birchwood Hotel & OR Tambo Conference Centre, Boksburg, Gauteng Province, 16 October 2023. The workshop aimed to find common understanding on initiatives that are aimed to manage international migration effectively in line with the National Development Plan and deliberate on the impact of migration in various communities.

Ideas are generated daily, and some carry on being worth millions, if not billions of Rand while others may not even get off the ground. Small businesses generate lots of ideas, but they may not find the platform to share their ideas with others. South Africa attracts large numbers of migrants – skilled and unskilled – from its poorer neighbours. This process has generated or exacerbated several social, economic, and political challenges, and necessitates bold new policies. This is particularly true if regional economic integration is to proceed.





Expensive, onerous, and inconsistent requirements for cross-border travel, and inefficient management of borders and ports of entry, undermines trade and necessitates policy intervention. In this regard, participants spoke of difficult visa requirements for residents of various countries in the region, requirements that also changed frequently. They also spoke of the political and practical difficulties that arise when requirements differ from country to country.


Other issues included the lack of appropriate permits (such as multi-entry permits for traders and people who live close to national borders), and infrastructural difficulties such as the absence, in some cases, of 24-hour border posts. The impact of regional integration on migration flows needs to be considered carefully. Although SADC is officially committed to increased economic integration and to greater freedom of movement, several policy issues need to be addressed. One of these is that some SADC member states also belong to other regional bodies. Increasing the freedom of movement of people in SADC might, therefore, have unintended consequences with respect to the movement of people who are not citizens of SADC countries, but who are citizens of countries whose regional institutions include one or more SADC country.

Another issue is the differences in size, culture, and language among SADC member states,

with the DRC posing particular challenges for managing greater integration.

Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Ms Thembisile Nkadimeng addressed the International Migration Workshop held at the Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre in Boksburg. During this address, the Minister highlighted insights provided by the 2022 Census data, which shed light on the impact of international and internal migration on South Africa's demographic makeup. Minister Nkadimeng emphasized the population growth and migration trends within metropolitan areas. This shift places immense pressure on municipal capacities, especially in the context of rapid population expansion, particularly evident in unplanned informal settlements and areas experiencing a surge in backyard dwellings.

Minister Nkadimeng further indicated that remote rural municipalities with low population densities confront a unique set of challenges related to infrastructure development, chiefly due to the exorbitant costs associated with establishing bulk infrastructure. She further stressed the complexity of these issues and their interconnection, emphasizing that managing migration is not the exclusive responsibility of a single level of government. Rather, it necessitates a collective effort involving national, provincial, and local governments.

A portrait of a woman with short dark hair, wearing a white top and a necklace, looking directly at the camera. The background is blurred, showing other people in a crowd.

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Each of these administrative levels plays a distinct yet interrelated role in shaping policies, enforcing regulations, and ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and by-laws. Minister Nkadimeng highlighted the imperative of synergy, remarking, “We are confronted with a multifaceted challenge, but through collaborative efforts, we possess the dynamism to address it.” In this spirit of cooperation, the Minister Nkadimeng called upon municipal leaders and traditional leaders to institute measures that facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the populations residing within the areas they serve.

Minister of Human Settlements, Ms Mmamoloko Kubayi addressed the workshop elaborating on the rights of aliens concerned that Government could legitimately choose to prohibit or severely regulate the entry of aliens on the basis of categorisations which Government could not use when dealing with its own citizens. It could, for instance, decide to prohibit entry into the country of anyone who is poor or anyone who is of a certain origin or age or even religion, up to the point where such actions are not found to violate the rights of religion or association of its own citizens.

Minister Kubayi lamented that “The restructuring of the migration section of the Department of Home Affairs into an Immigration Service should be accompanied by the creation of an additional

professional security service that complies with the Constitution. However, they would be especially trained to conduct investigations and monitoring at community level in respect of this subject matter. As specifically trained persons, they could not be recruited automatically from the ranks of the police or the defence force. Their equipment would be lighter than that which is available to the defence forces but may include some of the defence force’s heavier surplus equipment for border control.”

“This security service would be under the control of the IS and would be trained in community work and the protection of immigrants and refugees and could work in cooperation with the other social and welfare services at community level for which police training is inappropriate or unnecessary.” Minister Kubayi added.

Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Ms Nkadimeng outlined good governance as “the process of measuring how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources and guarantee the realisation of human rights in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption and with due regard for the rule of law”. Minister Nkadimeng said good governance means that the government’s decision-making needs to be prompt, on time and all processes must be aligned.

Minister Nkadimeng said in order to achieve good governance, there is a need to define a clear line between political and administrative roles. "At local government, one of the challenges we have is that these two lines are very blurred. In fact, I am arguing that in the review of local government we have to reduce the power of councillors if we want to do something about how we manage the affairs of the public, house rules and the citizens. You can't be a player and a referee at the same time. In council, a person today is a councillor, tomorrow an acting mayor reporting to himself on what he did today. The system has never been designed properly," Minister Nkadimeng added.

The Minister for Small Business Development Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams said "According to the White Paper on International Migration South Africa, as a sovereign state, has defined borders that are recognised by approximately 200 other states into which the political and legal world is divided. As a sovereign state, South Africa reserves the right to determine who is allowed entry into the country, and under what conditions," said Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams.

Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams further stated that "The 2017 White Paper on International Migration affirms South Africa's sovereign right to determine the admission and residence conditions for foreign nationals in line with its national interest". The White Paper proposes that international migration must be managed proactively and strategically in order to contribute to national priorities, such as nation building and social cohesion, inclusive economic growth and national security, "said Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams.

"According to the NDP, "Some of the long-term solutions to the skewed ownership and control is to grow the economy rapidly and focus on spreading opportunities for black people as it grows. Government procurement, licensing and other forms of economic rents should help reduce racial patterns of ownership of wealth and income, "said Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams emphasised.

"The NDP addresses licensing as a policy lever without referring to the general business license but instead address some of the sector specific licenses; namely energy generation and distribution; urban planning approval processes; water supply and waste-water management; the logistics platform, telecommunications; and licensing for water, minerals and environmental permits". Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams elaborated.

The Department has developed the Business Licensing Bill which will repeal the Businesses Act of 1991. The policy intent and thrust underpinning this Bill is centred on the following:

"Affirming the guaranteed rights of citizens as per section 22 of the Constitution that states that every citizen has the right to choose their trade freely; and that the practice of a trade may be regulated by law."

"The provision of a fair, transparent and ethical allocation of business operating licenses in a particular jurisdiction, in a manner that enables the citizens to actively participate in the economic life in that particular jurisdiction, while ensuring the protection of the environment, health and safety of all other citizens is critical in ensuring social and economic growth in local communities," Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams concluded.

