
Speech Delivered by the Deputy Minister in the South African Truck Drivers Awards Ceremony – 14 October 2022

The Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Chris Hlabisa

The TASA executives

The sponsors to this strategic and important awards events

The awards' prospective recipients

Please accept our warm greetings.

As a department of small business, we are pleased to have been invited to participate in this important event.

I want to state right from the onset that, our coming to this event is not only to share our inputs but also to listen to your frustrations and draw lessons for the work we are doing as a department of small business development. The task facing us is huge. We have to create employment for about 9 million people and the majority of them should be young people and we need you and your ideas for this huge task

We are meeting here today during the transport month to witness the first freight award ceremony aimed at acknowledging and rewarding excellence in this strategic sector of our country's economy.

Let be said for all to hear that as we speak, currently , it is the truck drivers that makes the pulse in the heart of our country economy to tick !

The trucking (road-freight) industry remains strategic in the country's economy. It is a fast and flexible link in supply chain management

logistics. It is an important job creator, and makes our country's economy to perform better.

For an example, this is a sector which amounts to not less than 32, 9 billion us dollars or R 598,31 billion rands.

It is through work done by you in this sector, that allows us to assert that indeed road infrastructure represents the arteries of economic development for our country.

In this context, research shows that at approximately 750 000km of proclaimed and unproclaimed roads network, South Africa ranks in the top ten in the world in length - ahead of Thailand, Spain, Germany and Sweden.

272 South Africa's network also represents 51.75% of the total SADC road network (1 449 354 km).

273 approximately 78.9% (591 869 kilometres) of South Africa's network is gravel, with 582 000km being non-urban and 168 000km urban roads.

South Africa has 158 131 kilometers of surfaced roads, the 18th longest surfaced network in the world.

274 According to the Committee of Transport Officials, there are about 190 600 kilometers of provincial roads and 61 436 kilometers of metropolitan roads.

Of the network that is surfaced, 38% is considered to be in good condition, 36% in fair condition and 26% in poor condition. For the gravel, only 8% is considered to be in good condition, 25% in fair condition and 67 % in poor condition.

Reports also show that currently, 87.9% of all freight in South Africa are reliant on road-based transport and 93.7% of all travel that focuses on transporting people is on the road.

This means that, you are the beneficiaries of a world standard road network and in some instances, you become victims of underdevelopment of our country's road infrastructure in some parts of the country.

Added to this is that according to the 25-year review report by the department of planning, monitoring and evaluation, weak freight infrastructure in the neighboring countries remains a central challenge to regional industrialization. Moreover, it means that South Africa has to develop its logistics infrastructure without synergies with neighboring economies. That contrasts to the situation in Asia, where countries have been able to build on each other's freight capacity to promote international trade.

We are certain that those areas will be and is being addressed as part of government program.

But the biggest question which this meeting must answer is whether, in this sector, do we have all willing south Africans participating and benefiting as they should. Based on the reports we have received, it is clear that, the answer is no.

It is concerning that 28 years into democracy, we are still faced with the reality that participation by black and Africans, youth and women in this industry is not happening as it should. **For an example, blacks and Africans are not found participating in bulk liquid gases, abnormal loads, container freight, removal trucks, auto carrier trucks; heavy duty recovery trucks; perishable goods trucks. As if this is not enough, there**

is still a load of regulatory burden which will keep black people outside this industry. This must change!

I want to argue that this situation will not change for as long as the structure of our country's economy remain based on the mineral energy complex, which is now finance led and continues to perpetuate historical apartheid networks that intentionally excludes blacks and Africans in particular. It must be emphasized that for our country, the issue of addressing racial economic exclusion is not just a political matter but it is fundamentally an economic issue aimed at unleashing the maximum economic potential possessed by all our people in the country.

We are inviting the leadership in the sector for a discussion about how we should ensure entry of black and African owned SMMEs and Cooperatives in this sector.

Our discussions will include putting a process in place on removing regulatory burdens and any barriers to new entry that have discriminated against our people over the years.

As Amical Cabral taught us to **“always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children”** .

I thank you