

**CLOSING REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF SMALL
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, MS DIPUO PETERS AT THE
OCCASION OF THE POLICY REVIEW ON COOPERATIVES,
PRETORIA, 31 AUGUST 2023**

- Program director
- Official of the various government departments and provinces represented here.
- Staff of the Agencies & co-operatives organisations who are here with us.
- Our EU partners for making this event possible through our EDSE partnership.
- Ladies and gentlemen

Ladies and gentlemen, partners, friends, colleagues, please accept our sincere appreciation for making the Policy Dialogue a success right from the onset.

There are many individuals both from inside and outside the department who have made an enormous contribution towards the success of this policy dialogue. We want to say thank you for giving it your best, thank you for going an extra mile without counting the cost.

The reality is that our people on the ground are tired of waiting for a better life, they have lost all hope for better days, we must act FAST we must make this a reality, it is that unemployed young person, mother or a person living with disabilities in your community that we must give hope to and change their lives.

We cannot fail our people, this dialogue must ignite hope and revive their trust in us, that this is indeed possible. We cannot sit like this again, and ponder on what did not work or what worked..we must act now ..its about time.

Program Direct, we have a collective responsibility to plan for those who can't cushion themselves against harsh factors brought on by poverty and hopelessness, those who have limited resources to sustain themselves. Ours is to guide them to use resources collectively. Cooperatives by their nature are viable and more could be achieved that would benefit poor and vulnerable communities and members to draw strength from each other.

Ladies and gentlemen, from the deliberations yesterday, we can conclude that managerial skills and technical skills are crucial as all cooperatives must be well diversified with members that have a variety of skills, income and backgrounds to compliment each other.

From your collective inputs, we also agree that cooperatives must require multi-dimensional assistance and we believe these should be captured as such in the reviewed policy.

We have to turn things around and deal a blow to poverty and unemployment. We carry the expectations and aspirations of our women, youth and people living with disabilities. Lets work together and speak from one voice and say..we will make it.

Today we have once again reasserted our commitment to better the lives of our people.

We have communicated a clear message that the morality of the democratic state must on amongst others be determined by the extent to which we keep our promise to better the lives of our people.

Our success on this task depends on building a broad front for development that involves a strong relationship between government and their organs of development and empowerment.

This cannot be achieved only through the development of policies and developing top-down programs. It will require that we position local government as an organ that is able to secure the well-being of South Africans and that is able to facilitate development, including supporting organs of development which exists to promote and secure the well-being of South Africans in a collective manner.

It is in this context that Cooperatives becomes relevant as organs of people's development that can be harnessed into effective instruments of addressing the challenges of unemployment, poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment.

We therefore need to consciously align the work of developing and supporting cooperatives with the District Development Model. This will mean aligning cooperatives to the districts economic development programs including positioning them to play a role in addressing service delivery challenges.

This must also include having confidence in using cooperatives to facilitate economic opportunities for wealth-creation, self-help, particularly in townships and villages. Our people are already using cooperatives to buy food in bulks and for savings, ours should be to enhance and support that initiative.

In doing this work we call on the Cooperatives Financial Sector to come forward with tried and tested proposals.

If we are to have any impact towards achieving an inclusive economy, we must invest more in working with cooperatives in inclusive Community-based Development.

If we invest our time and resources to support and develop cooperatives and prepare them to interact with the district economy, we can be able to tackle poverty, unemployment and inequality particularly amongst women, youth and people living with disabilities.

Cooperatives are an economic instrument at our disposal which have a potential to address many of the challenges facing our people, let us invest in building and supporting them if we are to turn the dream of building a developmental local government into reality.

We are steadfast in making a lived reality of the vision as enshrined in the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) of creating 90% of the 11 million jobs through Small Businesses. It is here, where Pillar 4 of NISED is calling for strategic partnerships for coordination within government itself and the broader ecosystem. It calls for the voice of business including cooperatives to be heard. From yesterday until today 31 of August 2023, we have been exchanging views, listening, and learning from each other.

We also acknowledge our strategic partners. Thank you for your zeal and commitment to partner with us in making investments towards the success of this policy dialogue.

We know your investments are not only about this event but beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen, we do not want this to be another talk shop, We hope and wish that in four weeks we will have a full report on the review and a new 2nd 10yr Strategy without any delay. Any delay will be stealing the ambitions and hopes of men and women who have entrusted us with delivery.

Remember the theme for this Dialogue “ Charting the future of Self-Reliant Cooperative Movement in South Africa “.

DSBD, this is not your 10yr Strategy. The atmosphere that prevailed throughout the two days of the Dialogue proves that. We had different role-players sharing what they have achieved, their challenges and also their drive and umph to succeed. As DSBD ours is to create an enabling environment and facilitate access to resources and iron out regularity impediments. We cannot fail our people. It's time for action.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, safe travels this afternoon.

I Thank you.