



MINISTRY
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

REMARKS BY MINISTER STELLA NDABENI-ABRAHAMS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE YOUTH GALA DINNER HOSTED AT MACLEAR

30 APRIL 2024

Programme Director;
Young entrepreneurs.
Distinguished guests.
Ladies and gentlemen

It is a great pleasure and a revolutionary honour to have been invited to this function.

It warms my heart to see young people taking their destinies into their own hands. Young people have been at the centre of every decisive moment in our history. This proud tradition of militancy was carried over from generation to generation. Young people have, indeed, earned their place in history through blood, tears and sweat, their innovations and ideas.

The history of the liberation struggle will be incomplete without mentioning the role played by young men and women. Throughout the history of struggle, young people will be remembered as gallant freedom fighters who selflessly sacrificed their own lives for the liberation of their people.

Different generations of young people of South Africa earned their place in history through blood, tears and sweat, and through their innovations and ideas.

As we gather here, we must remind ourselves that as young people, we stand on the shoulders of giants. Like generations that came before us, what our youth do today will have a direct impact on our future as a nation.

The actions of our youth will ultimately determine whether or not our vision of a non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa will be realised. Your actions will determine whether or not we are able to erode the legacy of many years of apartheid, dispossession, underdevelopment and economic exclusion. Indeed, your actions will determine whether or not the radical socio-economic transformation project as well as the unity and renewal of our movement that will become a reality or just an elusive dream.

Throughout history, young people consciously chose to occupy the foremost trenches in the struggle to defeat apartheid. Each generation took the struggle to a much higher level of intensity.

Today, as we seek to consolidate the gains of our liberation struggle, the country continues to look up to the current generation of youth to play a leading role once again in the national effort to confront the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

As a country, we expect our youth to contribute with the same determination, towards the creation of a better life for all our people. We

have seen the role played by the #FeesMustFall movement over the last decade or so, to take forward the struggle for quality, decolonized and free higher education. The current generations of young men and women must continue to occupy the front trenches in the reconstruction and development of our country and remain a force for progressive change and radical transformation.

As we confront the challenges of today, we must evoke the fearless militancy of the 1944, 1976 and 1980s generations to help us overcome the demons of racism and sexism, gender-based violence, poverty, unemployment, and inequality. In the name of these generations, we must fight and defeat the demon of racism, patriarchy and economic exclusion. Similarly, young people must never tire in our determination to eliminate the scourge of gender-based violence.

We carry a responsibility to inculcate the spirit of voluntarism, sacrifice and selflessness among young people which is prerequisite for a decisive victory in 2024. Working within the broader context of the Progressive Youth Alliance, you must ensure that SASCO wins back all the campuses where it had to contend unfortunate electoral setbacks.

The ANC government has a duty to empower young people and to help restore their dignity, many of whom are grappling, on a daily basis, with the reality and indignity of economic marginalization and inadequate access to education. *Similarly, we must challenge young people of today to seize the opportunities created by our democracy so that they can create a better life for themselves and their fellow compatriots.*

The fundamental story of the youth of our country is that South Africa has undergone dramatic change over the last three decades. Before 1994, young people were in the streets fighting for the liberation of their country and its people. In the post-liberation era, young people are again on the streets, but this time looking for employment and the opportunity to taste a better life.

It must trouble our collective conscience that thirty years since our freedom, the participation of young people in the country's economy still leaves too much to be desired. This is partly as a result of constraints and obstacles placed in the way of youth economic empowerment as well as lack of access to information and opportunities.

Given the current state of youth unemployment in our country, the question is not whether we should encourage our young people to look in the direction of entrepreneurship, but rather, can we afford not to? Today, as we seek to consolidate the gains of our liberation struggle, the country is again looking up to the youth to once again play a leading role in the national effort to confront the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

There are plenty of opportunities for young entrepreneurs. So what is to be done?

Let us challenge young people of today to seize the opportunities created by our democracy in order to create a better life for themselves and their fellow compatriots. *In line with the spirit of vukuzenzele, our young people must seize the opportunities brought by our freedom and democracy to empower themselves and their compatriots. As young people, we must*

utilise all institutions and opportunities that have been availed since 1994 to advance small businesses and co-operatives.

Young people must continue to occupy the front trenches in the reconstruction and development of our country. They must continue to be a force for progressive change and socio-economic transformation. They must be empowered to occupy their rightful place as change agents, rather as mere spectators in the unfolding story of economic emancipation in our country.

As a result of the self-evident poor economic participation of young people in the economy, government introduced an array of policy interventions in order to bring young people into the mainstream of the economy. My department and its agencies, SEFA and SEDA stand ready to develop and strengthen youth enterprises and youth cooperatives. Collectively, we are working towards building a nation of entrepreneurs. We pledge to support young people who have viable business ideas.

Our specific support mechanisms to young entrepreneurs, among other things, include; access to finance, business skill development, market access, competitiveness, easing the regulatory burden and advancing localisation, particularly leveraging on public procurement. Working together with the NYDA, we will continuously seek better ways of supporting and uplifting youth businesses.

We must remain true to the solemn pledge we made during our struggle for liberation that we would never consider our freedom attained and democracy achieved until all our people emancipated from the economic periphery, poverty, landlessness.

I thank you!