



MINISTRY
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

REMARKS BY MINISTER OF SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, MS STELLA NDABENI-ABRAHAMS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SMME AND COOPERATIVES AWARDS

17 November 2023 (Indaba Hotel, Fourways, Johannesburg)

Programme Director;

His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa;

All Ministers present; and a special acknowledgment of my Deputy Minister Dipuo Peters;

Premier of Gauteng, Mr Panyaza Lesufi;

All MECs, Members of Parliament and the Legislature;

The Mayor of the City of Johannesburg;

Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corp;

President of the Global Entrepreneurship Network, Mr Jonathan Ortman

ADG and leaders and officials from across government and entities;

Sponsors and Business leaders;

Distinguished guests; and most importantly the Hustlers themselves;

I'm delighted to be standing here this evening. It is indeed a privilege and an honour to be in the presence of our outstanding innovators and entrepreneurs.

It's even more fitting that we're doing this in the presence of His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa. The Presidential SMME Awards were his brainchild, but unfortunately, he couldn't attend last year's inaugural awards, as he was attending the G20 Summit in Bali. However, he still took the time to personally meet all the winners of last year's awards. We're very honoured to have you with us this evening.

We're also honoured to have with us tonight Jonathan Ortman from the Global Entrepreneurship Network as well. As it's Global Entrepreneurship Week, I'd also like to take

this opportunity to recognise and celebrate entrepreneurs around the world. It is our entrepreneurs who give us hope for a better future. I have full confidence that they will help resolve the world's seemingly intractable problems.

Honourable President, ladies and gentlemen, almost one year ago today at last year's inaugural awards, we launched the National Small Enterprise Development Strategic Framework. This is the new overarching small business strategy for the country. The strategy corrects the narrow approach of government operating in its own lane, and instead focuses on mobilizing all available capacity and resources in the eco-system. It does this through creating an enabling environment that makes eco-system role-players want to partner with government and with each other. The strategy directs us to forge practical partnerships to scale up access to markets, access to finance, and access to business development services.

We've had a busy year on all these fronts. On market access, we launched the Enterprise Supplier Development Community of Practice in partnership with a number of large corporates who have committed to open supply chains to small enterprises.

I was heartened to learn that Woolworths has finally succumbed to the boycotts for the freedom of Palestinians. As of two days ago, the company no longer trades with Israel. This is a step towards inclusivity, as well as an opportunity for the company to bring SMMEs into their shelves,

On access to finance, we completed the National SMME and Co-operatives Funding Policy, which is about to go to NEDLAC before it goes back to Cabinet for final approval. The policy, which also includes a component on venture capital funding, proposes a number of innovative measures to achieve financial inclusion, and de-risk start-up financing by banks and investors.

On business development skills and services, we have surpassed our target on establishing incubators, which we are developing in partnership with universities and TVET colleges. This is proving to be a great partnership model, where we can link innovation, skills development and entrepreneurship. Mr President, the University Centres for Entrepreneurship are both training entrepreneurs and sourcing products from them. A meeting with the Deans of Commerce across universities is scheduled to take place soon to further deepen this model.

I'd also like to acknowledge the new strategic posture of many of our Sector Education and Training Authorities who are now really supporting skills acquisition for self-employment and

new venture creation. This is a very important point of departure, and we are now starting to get scale in our efforts in townships and rural communities.

We have also had some success in strengthening the entrepreneurship eco-system itself. We now have the National Small Business Amendment Bill before Parliament, which will see the Small Enterprise Ombuds established, as well as enable the establishment of our new one-stop shop small enterprise agency, SEDFA.

I'd like to mention the partnership we have enjoyed over the recent past with the European Union's Eco-systems Development for Small Enterprises Programme, who supported us in the development of NISED and dialoguing across the eco-system.

I would also like to acknowledge the partnership we have with 22-On-Sloane who have become our active partners in eco-system building. As many of you will know, we are partnering with GEN Africa to host the inaugural GEC+Africa Congress in Cape Town in March next year. The focus is on continental eco-system building and we are confident this will be catalytic in realising the AU's 2063 Ambitions and the goals of the ACFTA.

There are many other partners who, because of time constraints, I can't mention by name but please know that the work you do with us as Government is highly appreciated. We pray for the day our business chambers would go back to being the formidable force they were in the past. The establishment of this department was conceptualised by the then NAFCOC which clearly indicates that when we work together towards a common vision, great things happen.

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight is the night of achievers. We are here today to celebrate and reward excellence and innovation.

I'd like to express my appreciation to all SMMEs, cooperatives and sponsors for their overwhelming response to the 2023 edition of the Presidential SMME and Cooperatives Awards.

Through these annual awards we pay tribute to the SMMEs and cooperatives for their resilience and innovation. It is our way of recognising the work being done to build a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

We're here to celebrate these hard-working people who have chosen the path least travelled. They are the pioneers among us and need to be recognised as such.

It is not easy being an entrepreneur. It is about sacrifice. Pulling yourself up by your bootstraps when things go wrong. Our entrepreneurs come up against all kinds of economic complexities and hardships but still persist until they succeed. Mr President, we simply must increase support for their selfless efforts.

Entrepreneurs, tonight is about celebrating your success. Your success is our success. Winners and runners-up alike.

There are numerous award categories for which we will announce the three shortlisted nominees, and the ultimate winner. These include excellence awards for various categories of enterprise, such as women-led SMME, township SMME, youth-led SMME, start-up of the year, co-operative of the year, and many more.

There are also the Pitch for Funding Awards, where we traversed the country listening to entrepreneurs pitch their business ideas. I must say Mr President, the future of entrepreneurship in South Africa looks bright. We have amazing talent as you will witness with the top five pitch winners tonight.

Finally, there are the discretionary awards to recognise innovation and for outstanding achievement in building the eco-system.

An Awards Event like this couldn't be done without our gracious sponsors who I would really like to thank.

I would also like to thank our adjudication panel who worked tirelessly and with absolute dedication to make this a thoroughly credible process. I would especially like to single out the 22 on Sloane team under the leadership of Kizito Okechukwu. Thanks also to my ministry team, departmental officials under the leadership of ADG Manzini, and board members and staff from Seda and sefa.

To all entrepreneurs and eco-system partners gathered here tonight. You give us hope that there is a better future in the making. I'd like to end with the following words from the late Charlotte Maxeke,

“This work is not for ourselves. Kill that spirit of ‘self’ and do not live above your people. If you can rise, bring some with you.”

I thank you