

# Deputy President David Mabuza: Human Resource Development Council Summit

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Address by Deputy President David Mabuza at the 3rd Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) Summit, Emperors Palace, Kempton Park

Programme Director, Adv. Richard Sizani,  
Minister of Home Affairs, Malusi Gigaba  
Minister of Science and Technology, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane  
Deputy Minister Inkosi Patekile Holomisa  
Head of the Secretariat of the HRDC, Ms Brenda Ntombela,  
Leaders of Labour, Business, and Civil Society,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to extend, on behalf of government, a special welcome to all of you including our guests from our continent and across the globe who are here to share with us their experiences on how best we can accelerate the development of our people's capabilities.

In coming weeks, the world will commemorate late president Nelson Mandela's birthday on the 18th of July. Had he still been alive, he would have turned 100 years this year.

Madiba was an ardent advocate for education and skills development because he saw these as best instruments to achieve equality.

As we gather here, let us be inspired by his unshakable belief that it is in our hands to end the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment, and inequality that bedevils our country and many developing nations of Africa and the world.

Speaking in the United Kingdom in 2005, Nelson Mandela reminded the world that, "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. And overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom."

Our Summit on human resource development is essentially about a search for solutions on restoring the dignity of South Africans by empowering them through education and skills, thereby affording them an opportunity to make a decent living.

This is also a gathering that yearns for leadership across all sectors of society. It yearns for leaders who will work tirelessly to lessen social tensions, unite our people, and transform their lives.

If, as leaders, we fail to work together to improve the lives of our people as envisaged in our Constitution, we will be risking all our democratic gains since 1994.

Through this summit, we seek to develop new networks, strengthen existing partnerships, and share the latest lessons on how through education and skills transfer, we can create a more humane and equitable world where each individual can realize his or her full development potential, and enjoy access to available opportunities for self-advancement.

For the Human Resource Development Council, this Summit offers the promise that it will be remembered as a market place of innovative ideas on how we can urgently implement programmes that will succeed in massively skilling our people and absorbing them in their millions in employment initiatives.

Therefore, this Summit must be remembered by the action plans that the HRDC and its social partners will adopt and implement to change the dominant narrative of poverty, unemployment, and

inequality that confronts our nation.

This Summit must also be remembered as a summit that ventured into solving the skills challenge of our time, and one that offered innovative solutions and concrete areas of collaboration.

The key outcomes of this Summit must point us to practical and concrete programmes of implementation, and deepen collaborative partnerships that allow us to respond more directly to the shortage of critical skills in our economy.

For us to develop capabilities to respond to global demands, we must innovate and embrace new approaches and models that fast track the acquisition and availability of critical skills.

The pace of change over the last few years has largely been shaped by technological disruption and innovation. This means that the winners in the 21st Century will be those that quickly adapt to the changing environment and meet such change with the necessary set of skills.

From the presentations and papers, we hope to be apprised on latest evidence-based research and credible data on what we are doing correctly and to hear where we are facing challenges.

We remain confident that the Summit will strengthen and sharpen our human resource strategy to substantially reduce unemployment and expand training.

Among issues of focus, should be investment in early childhood development which lays the foundation for holistic development, whilst cultivating love for lifelong learning.

Cognitive learning at the foundation stage of development is necessary for the achievement of better learning performance outcomes at later stages of development and skills acquisition.

This is an important summit that cannot afford to be called another talk show. Our debates and sharing of best practices must ultimately result in clearly defined plans that will improve the lives of our people.

We must never fall into the trap of meeting to lament on the state of affairs without providing practical and actionable solutions. As we present statistics and diagrams depicting our challenges, let us always remember that our figures represent real people who have dreams and aspirations like all of us.

After tomorrow, when young people read about this summit, they need to find hope that we see them as a resource for development.

As a result of our history, our youth is made up of those whose prospects for employment are compounded by lack of education and requisite skills.

Over the years, a combination of the sub-optimal performance of our education system and other socio-economic determinants of poverty have produced a large proportion of unemployed youth.

This is the challenge that must be confronted directly.

This summit must inspire hope and confidence in the millions of young people who are not in education and training that we are a country that never gives up on their dreams and potential.

Our social compact between government, business, labour, and community must speedily create employment and training opportunities for the millions of these young people who are not in education, not in training, and not in employment.

It must inspire our nation that as social partners, we are equal to the task of creating an inclusive society that prioritises the development of its youth and women.

Our children at our institutions of higher education, must have the confidence that they will not complete their training only to roam the streets for years before they can get employed or start their

own enterprises.

It is only through collaboration and by agreeing on a social compact for skills and jobs that we can reverse the tide of unemployment and the deepening poverty.

The theme for the Summit, “Partnerships that will revitalise work and learning for the 21st Century” is thus appropriate.

It is a theme that recognises the need for greater collaboration between the education sector and industry.

This is also a partnership that calls on all society to play its part in creating training, employment, and business development opportunities for our people.

Only an engaged, invested, and patriotic private sector has the key to unlock the full potential of the education and training sector.

When the education sector and industry work together, we have a better chance of accelerating skills development and enhancing the employment opportunities of those that have undergone training.

When the private sector understands that with all the training students can get, there is still no better place for refining training and acquiring experience than the work place itself.

As we do so, we must not neglect the plight of those young people who are not in employment, education, or training. Our social compact between government, business, and labour must speedily reduce the unemployment among this category as well.

We therefore wish to applaud a number of outstanding South African companies who are partnering with our education institutions to ensure that our graduates are better prepared for the demands of our economy.

We applaud those companies that are supporting our initiative of Adopt-a-TVET College and ensuring that our curricula match the needs of industry.

A number of South African business leaders and their companies are also actively involved in adopting some of our schools and investing in the training of our teachers in critical subjects like Maths and Science.

We call on many more business leaders to make it their business to adequately skill our young people at educational institutions and at the work place through internships.

Greater collaboration is also required between social partners to inform learners and expose them early about the various career options available and those careers that are set to be in demand for many years in the future.

To achieve a partnership that will revitalise work and learning for this century, means that teachers and lecturers need to approach their vocation with the greater commitment it demands.

Our summit theme on partnerships, is also a clarion call on everyone in the public service to see their work as agents of change, entrusted with the responsibility to rebuild our nation by rendering ethical and quality services to our people at all times.

It's a call for Batho Pele and Ubuntu to be the defining ethos and cornerstone of the new society that we are seeking to build.

It demands that all South Africans must be driven by the new consciousness of restoring the dignity of our people by empowering them with skills and affording them a chance to work for themselves and their families.

It means we must all put shoulder to wheel to “realise a developmental, capable and ethical state that

treats citizens with dignity” as envisaged in the National Development Plan.

And in a world of rapid social change driven by technological disruptions and innovation, we must forge partnership across all sectors of society where we live by the truism that learning is a life-long enterprise.

As we continue to focus on skills development, it must not be lost on us that even jobs that were considered as vocational, are now becoming high tech and require specialised knowledge and skills.

Therefore our training and skills development must be accelerated to keep up with the pace of change.

By embracing education as a lifelong journey, we will be better prepared to adapt to this world changing at a high pace.

At the heart of this journey to the South Africa of our desires, we must embed technology in our efforts of building the skills for the future. We must ensure that no one is left on the margins of a world that rewards e-literate and e-astute citizens.

By embracing technology as a resource and as an integral part of our future, we will be better equipped to derive the benefits of a global economy that is increasingly shifting from being resource-based to becoming knowledge-based.

By opening the eyes of our children to what has been termed the 4th Industrial Revolution, we stand a better chance to be at the forefront of these developments and to reap its benefits instead of being spectators and uncritical consumers of new technologies.

And all our work, plans, and policies, must never leave our people behind.

Instead, we must enable their full development and exposure to technology as means to leapfrog our country to higher levels of innovation and shared prosperity.

We must also bear in mind that our shared history with the peoples of Africa and many developing nations must inform and shape our strategy in the 21st century global economy.

This means recognising that our competitive advantage in the world of artificial intelligence, robotics, and knowledge economy lies in investing and mining our rich culture, heritage, languages, traditions, to shape the commodities and services that will give us an edge.

Like other nations who moved to higher levels of development from a similar historical experience and position as ourselves, let us also work together to invest in skills revolution and training that factors our identity and aspirations.

It was Nelson Mandela who said,

“My country is rich in the minerals and gems that lie beneath its soil, but I have always known that its greatest wealth is its people, finer and truer than the purest diamonds.”

We have all the confidence that our scholars and researchers present here, will see our people in informal settlements, those living as beggars at the intersections of our roads, some in our correctional facilities as gems that we need to rescue and polish.

We must see the young children who have to cross rivers in remote rural villages as the diamonds that will one day assume leadership of our country.

It is in our hands! And this Summit dare not disappoint the dreams of our people who want to contribute to their own development and that of our nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today also marks an important milestone for the HRDC as we introduce the new Human Resource Development Strategy.

Even though this comprehensive strategy is not a panacea to addressing all challenges of the moment, it is a tool that has as its pillars - the supply of adequate skills - especially scarce skills through our post school education system.

Its approach is informed by vision 2030 of the National Development Plan. It puts our youth, our women, and people from rural areas at the centre of our skills revolution efforts.

In line with the NDP, we seek to strengthen, improve, and expand the number of TVET colleges. We are working hard to improve the profile of our TVET colleges and qualifications in technical skills.

However, we must not be oblivious to the reality that we have many students who enter our TVET colleges and universities whose lives are dependent on the state social grants.

Access to education and skills training provides the best prospect for these millions of young people to escape poverty, help their families, and contribute to national development.

The issue that needs to be addressed is the relationship between human resource development strategy and development. In other words, our human capital development initiatives must be linked to national aspirations of development.

For the country to develop, we need a skilled workforce so that as a nation, we are able to raise our competitiveness and are able to respond to the dictates of a modern economy.

This strategy addresses the increasing competition in the global economy while simultaneously addressing inequality and reducing poverty throughout our country.

It is a strategy informed by our need to accelerate development, and match the supply and need for skilled workforce.

Our demand strategy aligns with a large-scale employment growth supported through skills training at lower levels.

It addresses the urgent need for large scale employment, especially for our young people and women who face the brunt and indignity of unemployment.

Collaboration and partnerships between government, business, labour, and communities is the backbone of the plan.

It is a plan that calls for human solidarity and action, starting today.

I have no doubt that our conversations and discussions at this summit will be inspired by the urgent need to work together to give opportunities and new hope to our people, especially our youth.

Equally, it should provide us with insights from elsewhere on what social innovations we can employ to address this challenge of youth unemployment.

Let us together think, innovate, plan, act, and finally prosper.

Once again, I wish you a fruitful summit and look forward to receiving your report and recommendations.

I thank you.

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