

**SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE W&RSETA BOARD, MR REGGIE SIBIYA AT  
THE OCCASION OF THE 2022 BLACK BUSINESS SUMMIT GALA DINNER**

19 May 2022, Gallagher Convention Centre, Midrand

President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Mr Cyril Ramaphosa  
Ministers and Deputy Ministers

President Mr Elias Monage and the Leadership of the Black Business Council

Chief Executive Officer of the BBC, Mr Kganki Matabane

Members of the W&RSETA Board

Chief Executive Officer of the W&RSETA, Mr Tom Mkhwanazi and his Management team

Partners and generous sponsors

Captains of industry

Esteemed guests

Ladies and gentlemen

A very good evening

It is a welcomed privilege for me to address the government and business community at this auspicious occasion of the 2022 Black Business Summit gala dinner.

I speak on behalf of the Wholesale and Retail SETA and convey our gratitude to the Black Business Council for extending the opportunity to partner once again for this important gathering. In our fourth year of participating in the Black Business Summit, we have demonstrated our support for our constituent stakeholder; the Black Business community as a key contributor to South Africa's economy. During this period, the summit has allowed us to elevate the topic of skills development as an enabler of economic growth.

Allow me to extend our continued support to the new leadership of the BBC under the astute guidance of Mr Elias Monage. The W&RSETA supports the vision of the BBC in its advocacy for the transformation of the South African economy which we share through our mandate as a skills development authority in the Wholesale and Retail Sector.

Ladies and gentlemen, as a collective, we have convened under the umbrella of the Black Business Summit in the last three years as our country experienced unprecedented challenges. We met on the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, last year only a few

weeks before the looting and this year we meet as the business community and citizens at large pick up the pieces of their lives following the devastating floods in KwaZulu-Natal.

President Ramaphosa, as the W&RSETA we draw inspiration and motivation from your responsive and resolute leadership during these challenging times. We have leaned on our values in positioning ourselves to respond to the challenges of present time. Serving within South Africa's third contributor to the GDP – the Wholesale and Retail Sector – we are being agile in providing programmes that will stimulate job creation and assist our companies to recover from the impact of disruptions. The July 2021 looting and recent floods are negatively affecting the economic hubs of our sector and main contributors to the South African economy. Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal which have been the hardest hit account for 50% to South Africa's economy. The significant impact of these disruptors further exacerbates our huge and increasing unemployment crisis. To counter the impact of these challenges, the W&RSETA is investing extensively in entrepreneurship and SMME development programmes

The deliberations of the past two days have provided a blueprint for the challenge that lies ahead to reconstruct and recover the South African economy. The address by our Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande earlier re-emphasised that skills development must take the centre stage of the country's reconstruction and recovery efforts. We have received our matching orders, sithunyiwe!

Allow me to ignite a little hope in dark times by sharing encouraging impact of the business community's contribution through the skills development levy system that the W&RSETA administers:

- Since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the W&RSETA has assisted over 1000 young entrepreneurs from Gauteng, Northern Cape, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Free State, to start or improve their small businesses. These young people have demonstrated resilience to overcome the massive challenges they are faced with, taking ownership of their lives, and making the most of the opportunities we have presented them with.
- During this period, about 1000 women entrepreneurs were also assisted to also start or improve their informal businesses in partnership with The Clothing Bank and some of South Africa's major retailers.

- On average, we have supported 2400 informal traders from the township and rural areas annually to become profitable and sustainable as they compete with foreign-owned businesses and large retailers that are expanding their operations in townships – a topic for another day.
- We have partnered with large retailer Boxer Superstores to assist about 300 farmers in rural Eastern Cape to be trained on business management and capacitated to gain access to the markets by selling their produce through Boxer.
- The Service Station Readiness Programme has benefited 1000 individuals from which several women will be opening new or expanding their fuel retail businesses.
- About 550 small and medium companies in KwaZulu-Natal were upskilled to weather the challenges of COVID-19 and enhance their capacity to grow and sustain their businesses in 2020/21. We are currently supporting 550 businesses including providing them with digital infrastructure in the second phase of the project.

Through these support initiatives, many of the beneficiaries who are women and the youth, the W&RSETA is contributing to the creation of much-needed jobs in our country. These achievements were made possible through the 1% skills development levy that companies contribute and importantly, the partnership with community organisations and training providers. There is hope and South Africa is a resilient nation.

Our continuous efforts will support 250 young entrepreneurs, 2700 informal traders and 120 co-operatives in the 2022/23 financial year. To alleviate the increasing unemployment and poverty in township and rural areas, the W&RSETA is investing over R100 million for training that will be implemented through the nine Community Education and Training colleges throughout South Africa. We are thrilled that the Mpumalanga CET College will take some 200 informal traders through training that will assist them to run sustainable and profitable businesses. About 200 out of a group of 400 young people will be trained on upholstery after which it is our hope that they will open businesses that will manufacture furniture.

The long-term vision to support localisation includes the construction of the R146-million Sekhukhune Skills Development Centre in Limpopo which among other, will forge collaborations for retailing of locally produced goods in stores.

This is the W&RSETA's contribution to the call of this summit to “ **Creating Jobs and Growing the Economy Through Supporting Localisation, Industrialisation, SMMEs, Black Owned-, Women-Owned and Youth-Owned Businesses**”.

Mr President, we are moving with agility and have put our wheel to the shoulder to contribute to the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan focusing on growing small businesses for sustainability. Self-employment is the answer to the immediate crises we are facing as a country.

Thank you!

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**Issued by:**

Marketing and Communications Department