

**SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE W&RSETA BOARD AT THE SOD-TURNING
EVENT OF THE SEKHUKHUNE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

21 October 2021, Groblersdal, Limpopo

Honourable Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande

Premier of Limpopo, Mr Stanley Mathabatha

Elias Motsoaledi Municipality, Cllr Julia Mathebe

Sekhukhune District Mayor, Cllr Keamotseng Ramaila

Members of the W&RSETA Board, the CEO, and his Management team

Sekhukhune TVET College Council, Prof MM Kanjere, the CEO and his Management team

DDGs from the Department of Higher Education and Training and other officials

Principals of TVET Colleges from this province

Izinduna as we call them in Zulu, or Magoshi

CEOs of other SETAs

Sechaba sa Sekhukhune

Ladies and gentlemen

Ke a le tamisha, thobela

I am standing before you this morning with great excitement as we witness the W&RSETA making history in the implementation of skills development in South Africa.

I may sound overzealous as I address you this morning, but I hope you will understand why this is a big moment for us. I am not exaggerating when I say to you that the W&RSETA has been revolutionary in its collaborations with institutions of learning through innovative programmes for well over ten years.

The journey of our involvement with the TVET sector started in 2010 when we became the first SETA to work with TVET colleges through the capacitation of lecturers to deliver our programmes. Through this project, our wholesale and retail companies opened their workplaces and stores to expose TVET lecturers to the practical work that they teach students in the classroom.

We took innovation to the next level in 2014 when we partnered with our companies, TVET colleges and the Durban University of Technology to establish Retail Schools of Excellence.

These centres were designed to produce young people who are prepared for the needs of the world of work.

TVET colleges are also represented in the W&RSETA's Qualifications Management Body to ensure that they are part of the process of developing qualifications for the Wholesale and Retail Sector as they are part of our delivery partners.

Our innovations are meant to help young people become employable while addressing scarce skills in the Wholesale and Retail Sector.

Minister, you will be pleased to know that we are challenging our companies not to complain about the poor quality of graduates and do something about it. Indeed, they are doing something about it – they are heeding your call and putting their shoulders to the wheel. We are making progress, Minister – one company, one TVET student, one student at a time.

Ladies and gentlemen, today's event marks another milestone in the W&RSETA's unrelenting efforts to position TVET colleges as institutions of choice for our young people. The W&RSETA was visionary in its plan with this project when the Board approved the construction of the Sekhukhune Skills Development Centre at an investment of R131 million in 2019. I say visionary because this was before the National Skills Development Plan which came into effect a year later, and has now made it a requirement SETAs to provide infrastructural support for TVET colleges. The multi-million centre that will be built here will have a retail and agricultural hub, engineering workshops and an administration block. Our Project Managers will take us through this in detail later in the programme.

Minister, the Board of the W&RSETA has collectively been steadfast in its support for this project. Even at a time when our funds were constrained due to the impact of COVID-19, this was one of the projects that the SETA prioritised because we are intentional in building for the future. The sacrifice that has been made now will bear fruit for many decades to come and change many lives.

We have not only stopped at constructing a building that will benefit students. We have also considered the sustainability of the project to extend to the community at large and will be engaging our companies, the AgriSETA and merSETA to ensure that this centre reaches its full potential. Our focus is on the retail value chain where we will have agricultural produce and livestock from this centre and processed for the retail market. Collaboration will be needed to realise this vision. Organic produced grown right from the rural community of Sekhukhune and sold across South Africa, and possibly outside our borders.

Batho ba heso, this centre is being built for you.

We are building a centre that you will be proud of. Your children will be skilled here to become employable and create their own jobs.

Premier, the W&RSETA is cognisant of the important role of the informal traders in building the economy of this community. The informal stalls outside this centre are the livelihood of our mothers and fathers. We plan to support them with skills and provide them a dignified area to run their businesses.

Some local businesses in construction from this community have benefited from the project and will continue to do so until the completion of the centre.

The SETA is open to discuss other projects that will have a great impact on the community. Our doors are open.

As I conclude, on behalf of the W&RSETA Board, please allow me to convey our gratitude to our CEO, Mr Tom Mkhwanazi for his sterling leadership that has led to this occasion. His management team under the direction of the Acting COO, Mr Siphoshe Shoba, has diligently managed this project despite the challenges that they experienced in a project of this nature which is a first for the SETA.

Together with our partner, the Sekhukhune TVET College, we have demonstrated the power of collaboration.

Please allow me to say that the W&RSETA is revolutionary and ask you to celebrate us with a round of applause.

This morning, I can proudly say that the W&RSETA is leaving behind legacies and the Sekhukhune Skills Development Centre is one of them!

Thank you!

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Issued by:

Marketing and Communications Department