

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE  
AND INNOVATION, PROF. BLADE NZIMANDE, ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE SETA SKILLS SUMMIT AT BIRCHWOOD HOTEL AT OR  
TAMBO CONFERENCE CENTRE, 23 APRIL 2024**

Programme Director;

Deputy Minister, Mr Buti Manamela;

Members of the Portfolio Committee;

Director-General, Dr Nkosinathi Sishi;

SETA Chairpersons and Chief Executive Officers;

SETA Accounting Authorities;

Post School Entities and Institutions;

Senior government officials;

Organised Labour and Business;

Community based organisations;

Members of the media;

Distinguished Guests:

I am honoured to deliver this keynote address at this historic gathering-  
the SETA Skills Summit.

This Summit is important in a number of respects. It is the first of its kind  
since SETAs were established in South Africa.

This Summit is a product of the vision of the Chairpersons of the SETA  
Accounting Authorities Forum and the Association of SETA Chief  
Executive Officers, working with my Department.

To help us appreciate the importance of this Summit, I wish to highlight a few key things. The first is the important role that is played by our Sector Education and Training Authorities or SETAs, in skills development in our country.

As the Department of Higher Education and Training, we are proud to state that, while we provide the overall strategic and policy direction, our SETAs continue to play a crucial role in implementing and facilitating skills development within their respective sectors.

Through their sector-specific focus and expertise, our SETAs contribute significantly to addressing skills gaps, skills mismatches, promoting employment and enhancing productivity within their respective industries.

Our SETAs also play a crucial role in aligning training and development efforts with the needs of employers and the labour market, thus ensuring the development of a skilled and capable workforce that can become a catalyst for economic growth and development.

The policy context for the work that is done by our various SETAs derives from such critical policy instruments as our country's Master Skills Plan, the White Paper for Post School Education and Training, the National Skills Development Plan, and the National Development Plan 2030.

These policy instruments are not only critical for enabling our country to articulate and implement a coherent human resource development plan, but also to ensure that we embrace a skills development approach that is collaborative and sustainable- as opposed to a piecemeal and competition driven approach.

This collaborative approach is particularly important if we consider the unacceptably high number of unemployed young people in our country and the urgent challenge of NEETs or people who are not in any formal education, employment, and training.

It is estimated that more 3.3 million young people in our country between the ages of 15-24 are not in employment, education, and training and unemployed. This is something that must concern all of us.

It is therefore understood that a collaborative approach will ensure a coordinated and targeted approach to skills planning, funding, quality assurance, and monitoring, resulting in a skilled and competitive workforce that contributes to economic growth and social development.

The second point I wish to focus on is why this Summit is extra special. An important part of this Summit is the six identified High Impact Programmes which will be 'shovel ready' to be implemented between 2025/26 to 2029/30.

These High Impact Programmes are aligned with our country's National Development Plan and National Skills Development Plan. With these projects, we intend to change the lives of millions of South Africans by the end of the term of the 7<sup>th</sup> Administration.

The focus areas of these projects include infrastructure, workplace-based learning such as internships; entrepreneurial and cooperative development and Fourth Industrial Revolution related programmes.

Later this evening, the Deputy Minister will share greater detail on these six Integrated High Impact Programmes.

The third and last point I wish to make relates to the value of coordinating our efforts. Although many SETAs had successful projects in the past with each other in collaboration, it was felt that it was not enough and that more can be done.

There is general acknowledgement that, in order to effectively address some of the urgent skills development challenges I have alluded to, all critical players will have to be more deliberate about working together.

We saw how the importance of such cross sectoral collaboration helped us to respond in a more effective way to the challenges that were presented to us by the advent of the global COVID-19 health pandemic.

Had it not been for our culture of collaboration, the impact of this pandemic would have been more catastrophic on our people, especially the poor.

One of the key policy instruments that is critical to enabling government and social partners to work collaboratively is our National Skills Development Plan, to which I alluded earlier.

As stated, our Master Skills Plan, the White Paper for Post School Education and Training, the National Skills Development Plan and the National Development Plan 2030 together provide us with a comprehensive framework for skills development in our country.

We therefore expect this Summit to produce well thought out policy action recommendations that will ensure that we do not only develop a long-term skills development pact, but that we also commit our various expertise and resources to the realisation of such a pact.

Put differently, our skills development system must ensure that our country has adequate, appropriate, and high-quality skills that are able to drive sustainable economic growth, employment creation, and social development.

Our social and economic challenges notwithstanding, this Summit provides us with a unique and rare opportunity to put in place institutional and policy interventions that can put our country on a different development trajectory.

I therefore wish to urge all the attendees to this Summit to use these two days to produce well thought policy recommendations that will contribute to giving the millions of our people the relevant skills that will enable them to create livelihoods for themselves.

Together with industry and partners we want to expedite the impact of skills development for the benefit of our country, especially the working class and the poor. This we believe will bring us closer to realising the theme of this Summit, which is 'Together Skilling the Nation.'

Thank you.