

MEC Seiso Mohai's Message on the Occasion of the 34th Anniversary of National Youth Day, 2010 June 16

Economic Development for Youth Development

June 16, the National Youth Day, in 2010 has great significance not only because of 2010 Fifa Soccer World. Yes the World Cup will have great resonance with the patriotic spirit and the youth gallantry of 1976 we are celebrating. The World Cup will, consistent with June 16, reaffirm the role of youth as a motor-force for progressive change in society.

We say this because we are confident that the 23 young men of Bafana Bafana will make the whole SA nation proud with the gallant fight they will put up against each of the toughest 32 teams they will encounter. We say this because South Africa will never be the same after this world cup. We are going to emerge a stronger and a united nation out this world cup. In this regard we thank constructive role sport has to nation-building and building social cohesion. The 2010 infrastructure legacy projects will take us a step further in our infrastructure development programme.

June 16 in 2010 has great significance particularly because of the growing increasing intersection between youth development and economic development. After 16 years since the attainment of political freedom, the need to significantly alter economic relations is looming larger as the course of transformation enters a new trajectory. This means, amongst others, we must do more and better in creating jobs, eliminating poverty and inequalities, developing skills and redistributing national income and wealth for all. Struggles on the economic terrain are going to dominate the consolidation of our democracy going forward.

Youth development is an important component of the overall national development. The efforts to create decent jobs for youth must be doubled and strengthened because youth constitute the largest majority of those who are unemployed.

Youth employment should therefore firmly be located centrally in our efforts to empower and develop young people.

It is therefore encouraging that work continues to unfold towards creating an incentive scheme for companies that employ youth. The work that is being done at the national level is to design a scheme that will encourage massive employment of youth in productive employment by the private sector whilst not distorting further, in any way, the labour market. This includes avoiding any unintended negative consequences on older workers.

The investment of advanced productive skills to our youth is key to addressing the structural faults in our economy. These economic structural faults arose historically in a racially constituted production process. Our unemployment is of a structural nature, rather than cyclic, largely because of a big lack of skills required by the modern industry of production and service. We are investing in technical, science, engineering, finance and other advanced skills so as to build a competitive economy that is also labour intensive. That is why we, as Free State Government continually increase our budget allocations and the number of young people we award bursaries for higher education. We have also increased the number of youth for training in the FET sector as well as the training of artisans.

The recent global recession, from which we are still struggling to recover, was caused by rampant speculative activities of the finance capital accompanied by conspicuous consumption by the middle class in North America and Europe. There were no savings and no productive investment. That is why there is almost consensus that the restructuring of the global economy, that has to be part of the way forward, has to be firmly grounded on regulation of financial markets, increasing savings and most importantly expanding the productive base of national economies. In fact, China was less affected by the recession partly because the drivers of the Chinese economic growth are productive sectors, the manufacturing sector in particular.

There is therefore no alternative to massively investing productive skills to our youth , for our own national development and for expanding the productive base of our economy. Additional to the measures I have alluded to, we are also developing the skills through such programmes as National Youth Service, internships and lenearships.

Our youth must continue to play the role of a motor-force for progressive change consistently with the spirit of June 16. They must defy the ferment from the right of our political and

ideological spectrum that is also represented in the provincial legislature. This ferment seeks to depoliticize and demobilize our youth into passive recipients of development. The advocates of this ferment also tend to distort the truth about past legacies and how they continue to manifest today. The youth are intimidated not to raise debates and views on matters economic. The debates on nationalisation and youth employment will help raise levels of economic literacy among youth and also bring to the fore important pertinent questions on the role of the state in economic development.

The rebellious spirit of 1976 is still relevant, albeit, in a different context. Whereas in the past protest was against the unjust, oppressive and racist system, today protest is part of the meaningful participatory democracy. This therefore means destruction of property cannot be justified and must be condemned. We call on freedom loving youth to take the centre stage in guiding mass militancy in raising their genuine concerns in a disciplined and orderly manner.

In doing so we must invoke the memory of great youth leaders of yesteryear such as Peter Mokoba, Parks Mankahlana, Bachana Mokoena, Eddy Mabitse and others. They left behind a great legacy of disciplined militancy from which the current generation of youth leaders can learn.

Young people are the dearest possession of our country, let's treasure them.

Work with youth, build the future!