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EXPLORING THE POST-SCHOOL TERRAIN: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN INDEPENDENT MEDIA AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Deputy President Mr Cyril Ramaphosa is the chairperson of the Human Resource Development Council of South Africa, which we profile in this issue of Independent Thinking. Mr Ramaphosa recently addressed a Youth Career Expo that coincided with the United Nations World Day of Social Justice. Here he highlights the significance of developing South Africa's youth as the best investment government can make.

'Tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare today'

IT IS an honour and a privilege to address the trustees of the South Africa of our dreams, you, the young people of our country. This Youth Career Expo coincides with the United Nations World Day of Social Justice. It is a day aimed at promoting collaborative efforts to tackle poverty, unemployment, exclusion and gender inequality and improve access to social well-being.

This gathering is about social justice.

It is about working together to build better lives for the young people of this country. The development of young people is a priority for our government. We know that investing in you is the best investment we can make in our country's future.

Your success will be our country's success.

Last year, after consultation with young people across the country, government adopted the comprehensive, action-oriented National Youth Policy 2020. Through this policy, government, the private sector, labour, youth organisations and civil society must collaborate so that our youth may reach their potential.

The National Youth Policy notes that our young people do not want a hand-out. They want a hand-up. You are the champions of your own development and authors of your own destiny. We are gathered here today to introduce some of the many opportunities that exist for youth.

Every two years, government publishes a list of the top 100 scarce skills in the country. This knowledge should inform your career choices. We have a dire shortage of electrical, civil, mechanical, industrial and chemical engineers. There are many unfilled vacancies for quantity surveyors, project managers and finance managers.

We have a shortage of artisans.

Many of these qualifications



Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa.

can be acquired at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, and Government is investing significantly in these colleges. We are also leading efforts to strengthen partnerships between colleges and the private sector.

We are encouraging companies to offer internships and experiential learning for students at TVET colleges. As a country, as a result of our past,

we are building off a low skills base. Our National Youth Policy directs us to progressively introduce free education for poor learners until undergraduate level.

It says we need to increase the funding options available to support students at post-secondary level who are academically successful but who are unable to complete their study programmes due to financial hardships. We will continue to

mobilise the private sector, the donor community and society at large to contribute to ensuring that the doors of learning and culture are open to all.

We encourage young people to seek volunteer opportunities and for companies and government departments and their agencies to absorb young people to develop their skills and improve their working experience. Work seekers must interact with the

Department of Labour and register on the Employment Services of South Africa database.

Unemployment among young people is a global trend which we must work hard to reverse. Young women constitute the majority of unemployed youth. This cannot continue. The private sector must do more to ensure gender equity in their employment. Access for young people with disabilities must also be expanded by companies, state agencies and government departments. Entrepreneurship is the heartbeat of a developing economy. We are here to reignite the spirit of entrepreneurship that was almost entirely extinguished by the racist policies of apartheid.

The Minister of Small Business Development is eager to assist young people from Soweto who wish to take the baton from outstanding Soweto entrepreneurs like Richard Maponya and Ndaba Ntsele. We are inspired by the success of new entrepreneurs who have taken advantage of the booming tourism industry in Soweto, and the many entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative industries.

It is our local entrepreneurs who will ultimately create the millions of jobs that we need to grow an inclusive economy.

Learning does not stop when you leave school, college or university, or when you enter the workplace. Make learning a part of your life, throughout your life. Treasure the schools, universities, colleges and libraries that are meant for your benefit and the benefit of future generations.

We need a South African youth that knows that this is their country, and that public infrastructure belongs to all the people of South Africa. We need young people who resolve differences through dialogue, not through vandalism, violence or intimidation.

We need a South African youth that refuses to be instruments of other people's ambitions. Such a youth is entrusted with leading our nation to shared economic prosperity.

In conclusion, let us recall the words of the American civil rights leader Malcolm X, who was assassinated 51 years ago.

He said: "Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare today."

"As the youth of South Africa, tomorrow belongs to you. So prepare today."

Learning does not stop when you leave school, college or university, or when you enter the workplace. Make learning a part of your life, throughout your life.

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