

**Opening Remarks by the Director-General for Higher Education and Training,
Mr GF Qonde, at the Joint Department of Higher Education and Training and
European Union Workshop**

Good Morning

Before we start the formal proceedings of opening this workshop, allow me to express on behalf of everyone present here today, our sincerest heartfelt condolences and sympathy in particular with the people and governments of Germany and Spain, and the families of the victims of the Germanwings airplane tragedy. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and loved ones affected by this tragedy.

It is truly a privilege and honour for me to welcome you to this joint Department of Higher Education and Training and European Union workshop.

Amongst us, there are more than twenty delegates, who have travelled from Europe to join us here today. This commitment is acknowledged and your interest in our Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector is sincerely appreciated.

I would like to formally welcome:

- the European Union ambassador to South Africa and head of the delegation: Mr Roeland van Der Geer;
- The French Head of Cooperation: Mr Frank Marchetti;
- The Director-General: Ms Deirdre Lennon who has travelled from Brussels and is responsible for arranging this workshop; and
- Mr Brutus Malada and Mr Christophe Larose who represent the European Union here in South Africa.

The delegation to South Africa from participating the following countries:

- the Netherlands;
- Ireland;
- Sweden;
- Germany;
- Denmark; and
- Switzerland.

As well as the Belgium representatives and British Council in South Africa.

In addition to this, a warm welcome to all the South African delegates from our universities, TVET colleges, quality assurance bodies, research entities and officials from the Department of Higher Education and Training.

I believe that this workshop was conceptualised as far back as 2013, when the European Union expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the South African TVET sector. I hope that over the next two days you will gain some valuable insights into this sector and be able to take these engagements forward in a meaningful way.

I would like to thank many of the member countries, without singling out any particular country, for their support from when this Department was established in 2009. You will over the next couple of days witness many of the milestones, which we have achieved to date.

While we have always had a college sector, this sector has been small and neglected. Our honourable Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, has shown great leadership and positioned TVET colleges as a key sector within the post-school education and training environment.

The TVET sector is viewed as the cornerstone of skills development within the post-school education and training sector, and aims to develop “a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path”. Many countries, including South Africa, are faced with a growing number of youth who are not in employment, education or training, often referred to as the NEETs. Unfortunately, our youth unemployment rate is amongst the highest in the world and while we realize that, the TVET sector alone cannot address all these problems. As a Department we acknowledge these expectations placed on the sector and as a result have positioned ourselves to do our part in addressing and mitigating these challenges.

A study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which was done last year, highlights a number of areas where change is required and the need to address these changes in a systemic manner, based on the experiences and lessons learnt from our counterparts in other countries. The deliberations today

and tomorrow will specifically focus on lecturer development, an area highlighted in the OECD report.

In order to raise the quality of teaching and learning, and increase throughput and pass rates in our TVET colleges, we will have to focus on our lecturers. Many of our 10 000 lecturers are under-qualified and given the expectation that the TVET sector is expected to more than double on the 2013 student enrolment figures, when looking at the envisaged targets contained in the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training and the National Development Plan, lecturer development becomes crucial. Lecturer development is not only a responsibility of our universities; colleges themselves have an important role to play, together with industry.

In conclusion, I wish you well in your deliberations and trust that we will emerge from these two days with a coherent framework for addressing lecturer development in the entire system.

I thank you.