



## higher education & training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING,  
MS THEMBISA FUTSHANE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CLIMATE TALKS “POWERING  
POSSIBILITY: JOBS AND INNOVATION IN SOUTH AFRICA’S JUST ENERGY FUTURE” – TAKING  
PLACE AT THE LOFT AT NINE, MENLO PARK, PRETORIA**

Date: Tuesday, 02 December 2025

- **Programme Director**
- **German Ambassador**
- **Swiss Embassy Representative**
- **Representatives of the German Embassy and development partners**
- **Leaders from industry, academia, and civil society**
- **Our colleagues from government**
- **Entrepreneurs and young innovators**
- **TVET, university, and postgraduate students**
- **Distinguished guests**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**

Good morning,

It is a privilege to be here and to address a gathering that speaks so clearly to South Africa’s future. The energy transition is not a distant policy debate. It is already shaping the economy our young people will inherit, the skills they will need, and the communities we must collectively support. Events like today’s play an essential role in connecting opportunity, talent and vision at a time when our country is undergoing profound change.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the German Embassy for organising today’s event and for bringing together such a diverse group of people. This reflects a deep commitment to partnership and to strengthening South Africa’s skills and energy transition agenda. Our gratitude also extends to the Government of Germany for its long-standing cooperation with South Africa, and in particular to GIZ for its continued technical and capacity-building support

and KfW to the financial support to the TVET sector. From curriculum development and lecturer training to equipment support and workplace exposure opportunities, this partnership is helping to prepare our young people for meaningful participation in the emerging green economy.

I would also like to recognise the important role of the companies represented here today. Industry leaders such as BMW, Siemens, Siemens Energy, Bosch, Festo Didactics, and initiatives like the uYilo eMobility Programme. They are not only transforming their own technologies and business models in response to global energy shifts. They are also investing in South Africa's future workforce through training partnerships, internships, workplace exposure, research collaboration and equipment support. Their presence here today demonstrates a commitment to building strong links between industry and the TVET colleges and universities. These companies remind us that the Just Energy Transition is not only a government responsibility; it is a shared endeavour where industry plays a critical role in shaping skills, creating jobs and opening pathways for young people into the green and digital economy

Ladies and gentlemen, a transition cannot be considered “just” if it leaves people behind or if those who carried the burden of the old energy system cannot benefit from the new one. And this is where the skills system becomes central. The transition to cleaner, accessible and more affordable energy requires a whole ecosystem of new competencies across construction, maintenance, digitalisation, community engagement and entrepreneurship. The success of the transition depends on the skills of our people. It depends on our ability to prepare South Africans for work, for lifelong learning, and for meaningful participation in economic renewal.

Young people are particularly crucial for the Just Transition. You are the ones who will build and maintain wind farms, solar parks, new electric vehicles or hydrogen facilities, run small energy businesses and design digital grid systems. You are the ones who will build the industries and the jobs of the future.

The Just Transition must create real and tangible opportunities for you in the form of accessible training, decent work, entrepreneurship support and pathways into stable employment. Our system must provide multiple entry points, multiple chances, and multiple supports so that young people can participate fully, regardless of their background.

In the last few years, DHET has worked closely with a wide range of partners, including SETAs, the private sector, civil society, and international partners such as GIZ, to strengthen the skills pipeline that supports the energy transition.

Together, we have begun to:

- Revise curricula to include renewable energy, electrical maintenance, energy efficiency and other transitional skills.
- Support lecturer development and provide training equipment in selected colleges.
- Pilot new models of community-based skilling linked to local opportunities.
- Expand access to recognition of prior learning, so that workers with experience can be integrated into formal learning pathways.
- Enable partnerships with industry to provide internships and workplace exposure.

Let me specifically mention the establishment of the JET Skills Desk. This dedicated unit within DHET is strengthening coordination across government, SETAs, training institutions and development partners to ensure that South Africa's skills system is fully aligned with the needs of the Just Energy Transition. The JET Skills Desk plays a crucial role in identifying emerging skills gaps, shaping responsive curricula, supporting colleges, and ensuring that young people have real and practical pathways into new energy industries. Its work helps us move from policy to implementation, ensuring that the transition truly delivers opportunities for our people.

As government, we have a responsibility to ensure that the benefits of the transition reach communities affected by coal phase-down, including labour-sending areas, informal settlements around power stations, and former coal mining towns. A "Just Transition" means that:

- Workers are not abandoned as industries change.
- Communities are part of decision-making, not observers of it.
- Training opportunities are accessible, local and relevant.
- Public investment reaches the people who need it most.
- No one is asked to sacrifice their livelihood for a transition from which they do not benefit.

This is what justice demands of us. And this is what we must uphold as we move forward.

- To our learners and young participants: Use these platforms. Ask questions. Seek out opportunities. The energy transition is your generation's opportunity to shape the world you want to live in.

To our educators and college leaders:

- Continue to innovate, to partner, and to bring the transition into your classrooms and workshops. Your leadership determines whether skills translate into real employability.

To our partners from business and development agencies:

- Keep working with us. Keep opening doors for young people. Keep sharing technologies, expertise and insights. Together, we can build a workforce that is ready for the future, and a future that is ready for the workforce.

Let us continue to build a skills system that is responsive, inclusive and forward-looking. Let us empower our youth with the tools they need to succeed. And let us ensure that the energy transition becomes not only a technical achievement, but a national project of justice and opportunity.

**Danke schoen. I thank you.**