

MEDIA STATEMENT

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MINISTER NZIMANDE STATEMENT ON SOUTH AFRICA -UNDP PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT TO ENHANCE VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande welcomes the signing of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Higher Education & Training (DHET) agreement on enhancing vocational training in line with private sector needs through a TVET project to up-skill youth and women for skills relevant to the automotive industry.

This joint programme will enhance economic empowerment opportunities for South African youth and women through skills development interventions and strengthening the institutional and educator capacity of identified Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges.

The MoU is signed together with a project document titled “Automotive Training and Re-Skilling in the Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery for Vulnerable Youth and Women in South Africa”, which a year-long project is focused on capacitating TVET vocational training in the automotive industry, funded by the Government of Japan.

The project seeks to improve the provision of automotive skills through a partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and to strengthen the capacity of the selected TVET colleges to align with the post-COVID-19 economy and labour market needs, including through flexible and digital learning mechanisms.

“TVET colleges have and continue to play a crucial role in providing vocational training to women and youth, as well as supplying the demand for semi-skilled workers in various industries. The automotive sector employs workers across various skills levels and is central to re-industrialising the South African economy post-COVID-19. It for this reason that the project will support three TVET colleges namely Coastal KZN College (Kwazulu-Natal), Northlink College (Western Cape), and Tshwane South College (Gauteng),” said Minister Nzimande.

The Minister said the project activities of this programme include a rapid needs assessment that will uncover the key challenges and opportunities faced by the TVET colleges and students in the COVID-19 context, the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the beneficiary TVET colleges through the provision of upgraded equipment, capacity building of TVET youth and graduates for skills to gain employment, and the establishment of an engagement platform between TVET youth and job opportunities in the automotive sector.

“We have always looked at training our students for employability and the skills that they acquire in our TVET colleges should help them easily get employment or be able to create employment themselves through the artisanal and technical skills we offer. We have since received compelling support from Japan through financial resources to ensure that the technical capacity of our TVET colleges is aligned with the industry requirements and private sector needs broadly,” said Minister Nzimande.

COVID-19 has deepened development challenges that nations were already struggling to address. The youth unemployment rate in South Africa is at a concerning state (exacerbated by COVID-19), and the pandemic has also forced some learning institutions to suspend their offerings or pursue remote learning. Intensive responses are needed; that are not only driven by government, but also the private sector and development partners, to accelerate development, transformation, and resilience.

“UNDP has prioritised the education sector as a key lever to achieving equal opportunities for all South Africans and ensuring that no one left behind. However, COVID-19 has greatly disrupted the provision of education. UNDP programming tackles the very core of the challenge - access and education infrastructure – through promoting development cooperation, building collaborative networks, and driving innovation,” said Dr. Ayodele Odusola, Resident Representative of the UNDP South Africa.

This project will consolidate the existing interventions and government plans to support youth, women, and vocational training by providing skills to enhance employability and increase linkages with the private sector, particularly the automotive sector. Although it will run over a period of one year, UNDP and its partners have designed the project with special focus on engaging key role players to secure additional resources and ensure sustainability. UNDP has also been working closely with key actors in the automotive industry such as the National Association of Automotive Component and Allied Manufacturers (NAACAM) and Toyota. It has also made linkages with existing national interventions such as the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention by working with the SA Youth Mobi platform implemented by the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator.

“Japan is committed to the skills development in South Africa and this project is closely aligned with the broader interests of the Japan-South Africa collaboration. The project builds up on already existing interventions we have in the country in relation to technical education and vocational training. We envision that the partnership contributes towards the business exchanges between South African and Japanese industries to achieve greater employment opportunities for youth and women in SA. The project, in alignment with the Toyota Manufacturing School, is gaining traction among the international business environment improvement program organized by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan,” said His Excellency Mr. Maruyama Norio, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of South Africa.

The project is one of several COVID-19 response interventions that UNDP has been championing alongside the South African government to support the country to

recover from the devastating impacts of the pandemic. Ongoing projects include the joint initiative with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) in empowering Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), and a youth employment and enterprise development programme in partnership with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) to intensify efforts to reduce youth unemployment.

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