

# **ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION, DR BLADE NZIMANDE, ON THE OCCASION OF WORLDSKILLS SOUTH AFRICA NATIONAL COMPETITION OPENING CEREMONY**

6 June 2022

Programme Directors DDG: Futshane and DDG: Mvalo;  
KwaZulu-Natal Premier Mr Sihle Zikalala;  
Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Mr Bhuti Manamela;  
Executive Mayor of eThekweni, Councilor Mxolisi Kaunda;  
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Ms. Nompandolo Mkhathshwa;  
Members of the Executive Council (MECs) and Provincial Legislature present;  
Mayoral Committee Members of eThekweni Metro and Councilors present;  
Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nkosinathi Sishi;  
Staff in our Ministry;  
Officials from my Department and other spheres of Government;  
Sector Education and Training Authority Chairpersons, Chief Executive Officers and other officials;  
Technical and Vocational Education and Training Principals and other officials;  
Leadership from South African College Principals Organisation (SAPCO);  
Industry Partners and Leaders;  
Competition Sponsors;  
International Guests;  
Leadership from our Trade Unions;  
Members of the Media;  
Ladies and gentlemen (attending physically and those attending online);  
Fellow WorldSkills South Africa National Experts and officials;  
And lastly our Guests of Honour – Our National Competitors.

Good Evening!

It is with great pleasure that we are hosting our 4th WorldSkills South Africa (WSZA) National Competition, this time together with a Conference and Career Festival 2022 here at eThekweni under the theme: “Ratcheting up the Production of 21st Century Artisans”.

Ratcheting means process of taking irreversible steps in a particular direction.

The direction that I am referring to is the gradual and systematic rejuvenation of the apprenticeship system in the country. The focus is now on implementing and scaling up The National Apprenticeship and Artisan Development Strategy 2030 with a view to produce artisans fit for the future as well as the 4th industrial revolution.

I welcome all of you all this evening to this great occasion, which is our own Skills Olympics.

Ladies and gentlemen

We are always warmly hosted in eThekweni. We are acutely aware that we are holding this event after the unfortunate death and destruction caused by inclement weather and floods. We also wish to express our condolences and solidarity with families affected by this disaster.

We were told with these floods eThekweni Metro received around 30% of its annual rain fall within a period of twenty-four hours, or simply put, in one day, the city received rainfall equivalent to 110 days.

As government is ramping up its plans to respond to this unfortunate catastrophe, according to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey as released by the Statistician-General, for the first quarter of 2022, KwaZulu-Natal experienced a decline in employment by 53 000 comparing quarter to quarter with last year. This happens whilst in all provinces there was employment increase, albeit marginally.

Our hosting of our WorldSkills South Africa in this province and in particular in eThekweni, we hope will make its modest contribution towards the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of eThekweni, especially in the hospitality industry.

What makes this competition even more befitting is that it is hosted in a month in which we celebrate the 46th anniversary of the 16 June 1976 student uprising in Soweto when young people protested against apartheid education, especially the racist and insensitive imposition of Afrikaans by the apartheid regime as a medium of instruction.

This year's celebration is held under theme: "Promoting sustainable livelihood and resilience of young people for a better tomorrow". The official Youth Day celebration will be commemorated in the Eastern Cape.

As South Africa we are, in many respects, fortunate to have a youthful nation. However, the recent unemployment statistics on young people is a cause for concern. The 2020 fourth quarter Labour Force Survey found that about 8,6 million young people aged between 15 and 34 years are not in education and not in employment (NEETs).

At the heart of the challenge for PSET is to cater for these youth in our college system, with vocational education and training as the most important point of access.

We are indeed determined to grow the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector faster and to enable subsidy and infrastructure funding that can support its rapid student enrolment growth.

We now have taken a decision to fund skills programmes offered by our former Adult Education Centres, now known as Community Education Training (CET) colleges, to the tune of R200 million. We are also reviewing our five-year enrolment plan for CET colleges and develop a sustainable funding model for this sector.

Furthermore, in helping drawing more young people into the economy, government has, under the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention, initiated various youth development and empowerment initiatives to support young people.

These range from formal education and training; learnerships and internships as well as support for youth entrepreneurship. Our initiatives provide the necessary support for young people to take on their challenges and succeed.

I therefore urge all the students to look out for these opportunities, especially the Workplace-Based Learning opportunities as presented through our Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in partnership with the private sector.

In order to afford the youth of our Continent a platform to engage in constructive dialogue on matters that affect them, government will host the maiden Nelson Mandela Youth Dialogue (NMYD) which will take place annually starting this year, 2022. The dialogue is a Presidential initiative and will take place from 7 to 20 July 2022.

It will be anchored around the name and legacy of our hero and international statesman, former President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and will facilitate conversations aimed at inculcating a culture of ethical leadership in Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Team South Africa for its outstanding performance at the WorldSkills Africa Competition which took place in Swakopmund, Namibia in April 2022.

Team South Africa participated in 10 skills out of 14 skills and achieved: five (5) Gold Medals, two (2) Silver Medals, one (1) Bronze and 1 Certificate of Attendance, with the single highest number of gold medals awarded to the team.

Our 4th WorldSkills South Africa National Competition takes place three (3) years after the 45th WorldSkills International Competition which took place in Russia, Kazan in September 2019. And we are just over three (3) months before the 46th WorldSkills International Competition scheduled for the 12 to 17 October 2022 in Shanghai, China.

As the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), we are hosting the biennial WorldSkills South Africa National Competition as an important mechanism of promoting artisan skills as a viable career choice as well as to open up potential partnerships with industry.

This WorldSkills South Africa (WSZA) National Competition was preceded by Regional Competitions which provided critical platforms for us to select our competitors.

Through these regional competitions we were also able to assess the levels of our apprenticeships and artisan development in addition to advocating for the uptake of artisan careers as careers of first choice by our students.

This WorldSkills South Africa programme supports the 'Decade of the Artisan' programme which we launched in 2014 after a very successful Year of the Artisan in 2013.

We host WorldSkills Competitions in order to stimulate interest of learners, especially in our Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector.

This will contribute towards alleviating skills shortages in South Africa, especially mid level skills, as captured in our Occupations in High Demand, Critical Skills List and the Skills Strategy in support of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP).

Further to this, this WorldSkills Competition provides a platform from which industry partnerships can be established. Critical to this partnership, is the development of a co-leadership model in curriculum development, standard setting and trade test development.

Government has already spent vast amounts of money to support our youth through the TVET system, and therefore it is important that we assist them to transition to the workplace through appropriate placements.

To this extent, we have, amongst others, established partnerships with:

- Japan/Toyota on automotive industry training;
- Germans on the dual system;
- UK to address youth unemployment;
- Huawei on ICT skills academies in 22 TVET colleges;
- SAMDRA on repair and maintenance of mobile devices.

These agreements include the provision of training for both TVET college students as well as to give workplace exposure to TVET college lecturers so that they teach and train in what is currently needed by industry.

Programme Directors

Let me elaborate further on a component of the co-leadership that we are advocating for in our skills revolution.

One of the challenges facing our artisan training system and the apprenticeship system is the insufficient workplace-based learning spaces and opportunities for apprentices.

As we well know, the workplace availability is the backbone upon which our apprenticeship and artisanal training system is built.

It therefore follows that much advocacy work and engagements are required with industry in order to ensure that a conducive environment is established for the development of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) to implement apprenticeships and other required training programmes. We need to be even more innovative on how we use the skills competition to draw industry and employers to our skills development strategies.

It is against this background that I will be hosting a summit of NEDLAC social partners on strategic industry partnerships with the SETAs and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, this month of June on the 28th to 29th 2022, here at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre.

I am also expecting the SETAs to really and truly up their game on supporting work placement of our college students and other trainees. In fact private training providers in the SETA system must be expected to also arrange work placement for trainees. Without such work placement we have no vocational or skills development system.

Employers are very critical in our artisan development and World Skills Competition as they should also be in a position to advise our colleges around issues of curriculum, in response to demand led skills development interventions. We need to come up with even more creative solution on how to incentivise and partner with employers and industry to support skills development.

As we plan massifying the enrolments and building of more infrastructure in our TVET sector, our colleges should therefore implement quality industry driven curriculum by engaging the employers with the purpose of strengthening and improving the curriculum, so that students could be directed on the right path.

We have now also incorporated into our plans that all college principals must have in their performance agreements with the department the issue of workplacement and partnership with industry. Any college principal who does not promote workplacement has no place in our TVET college system!

As we near the end of what has been a successful Decade of the Artisan Programme and the 10th Anniversary of the White Paper for Post School Education and Training (November 2013 to November 2023), we need to escalate artisan training and deepen partnership with employers and industry.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Skills development transforms and changes the lives of young people around the globe, this is what the World Skills International seeks to achieve.

Skills build self-esteem and release potential. Skills create opportunities and connect communities. They are the foundation of economic progress and the building blocks of our world.

Through hosting this WorldSkills Competition we want to help our youth to change their lives, and the fortunes of their communities and indeed help develop our country!

Our skills competitions measure excellence, celebrate champions, and encourage hundreds of thousands of young people to turn their passions into a profession or occupation, and change the trajectory of their families and society at large for the better.

#### Fellow Competitors and Participants

The WorldSkills South Africa National Competition is now officially in session and it will offer you huge benefits and opportunities.

Always remember that this competition is more than winning and taking the prize home, but, is it is about the improvement of South Africa's vocational skills, coupled with finding new innovation methods as dictated by the 4th Industrial Revolution in order to grow our economy and create more jobs.

We joined this competition just under 10 years ago, because we wanted to judge our own skills and knowledge against the best in the world. This will allow us to know exactly the nature and scale of the challenge we face and what needs to be done to produce truly excellent and competent artisans. Much as we aim to win, but we must also learn from our failures!

Through this competition and the WorldSkills International Competition, we want to create opportunities for learners to become the very best version of themselves possible.

These competitions offer life changing pathways and opportunities that involves important additional experience.

I want you to see this competition, as an opportunity to further develop your skills and build your networking and communication skills by learning from your industry peers and benchmarking your skills against those you are compete with, starting from the local to the international level.

Off-course, the winners at this National Competition will represent our country at the WorldSkills International Competitions in various skills disciplines in October in Shanghai

This is your opportunity to shine and put your best foot forward.

Do not allow the sacrifices of the 1976 youth to be in vain but build from that strong foundation.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Hundred and ninety-seven (197) competitors will participate at this WorldSkills South Africa National Competition. Months of preparation from the Department and our partners has led us to this moment.

I would like to thank the contributions from all our sponsors whose names are continuously highlighted on the screens above. Thank you very much for your continued support and partnership. Siyabonga, Re-a-Lebogo, Baie dankie.

I also want to thank our Deputy Minister Buti Manamela for having been with us throughout the various stages and for being the champion for the Skills Competition. Let me also thank our Director General, Dr Nkosinathi Sishi, for his unwavering commitment in supporting this competition and skills development generally and all other DHET officials, our TVET colleges, the SETAs, industry and employers, and all other role players. Siyabonga!

I wish all participants at this Competition, the Conference and various Career Festivals that will be held at Umgungundlovu, Gamalakhe and Nongoma a successful run!

I officially declare this 4th WorldSkills South Africa National Competition, Conference and Career Festival open.

I thank you