THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION, DR BLADE NZIMANDE ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COLLEGE PRINCIPALS ORGANISATION (SACPO) NATIONAL GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE PREMIER HOTEL OR TAMBO-EKURHULENI

8 December 2020

Programme Director;
All members of the South African College Principal’s Organisation (SACPO); led by President Sanele Mlotshwa;
President of Huawei Southern Africa Enterprise Business Group, Mr Liaoyong;
DDG TVETs, Ms Aruna Singh;
SACPO CEO,
Members of the Huawei delegation;
DHET Senior Officials;
International and distinguished Guests;
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen

Allow me to welcome you and extend my appreciation to the South African College Principals’ Organization (SACPO) for inviting me to officially open
this National General Council taking placing just few days after the day in which as a country and the world we marked the 2020 World Aids Day.

As we battle COVID-19, we dare not forget that we are still facing another pandemic; that of having the largest number of people living with HIV in the world. It is encouraging, however, that over the last decade we made progress in reducing the number of new HIV infections in the population by nearly 60%.

It is also encouraging that HIV infections in adolescent girls and young women have significantly declined in the last decade. This is a crucial group because they are much more likely to be at risk of getting HIV.

Ladies and gentlemen

SACPO is a very important voluntary structure which ensure that we better coordinate the work that we do in the TVET sector. The progress that we continue to realise in this sector would not have been possible had it not been because of the positive and constructive role of SACPO.

Thank you very much for your immense contribution to our PSET Sector, particularly as we traverse the uncharted terrain of COVID-19 and for ensuring that you continue with your governance, management, teaching responsibility. Siyabonga kakhulu thishomkulu, Mlotshwa! Ntumbeza kaNtanzi KaLwandle kaluwelwa, kanye nethimba lakho lonke lothiso’Mkhulu nabasebenzi bonke kumakoleshi wethu kwizwe lonke.

This NGC is taking place at a time of immense global and local upheaval, uncertainty and turbulence caused by the new fourfold crises of:
• COVID-19;
• deepening economic crisis; locally and globally;
• the multiple crises of socio-economic sustainability for families, households and communities, and
• Climate Change.

In recent months, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing major shockwaves across the planet, bringing immense distress on humanity.

This pandemic has acted as an accelerant on the back of previously existing levels of social inequality that have marked South Africa as one of the world’s most unequal societies, deepening socio-economic inequalities thereby threatening the very existence of humans.

On such immediate crisis is the existential threat of climate change. As we face down a number of intertwined crises – from health and the economy to inequality and leadership – now is the time for government and businesses to reassess their values and think about how to become more responsible and sustainable in using the environment.

We must ask ourselves where we can have the most influence – and then we must act, so that we can start driving towards a healthier and more resilient future.

Solving the climate crisis will address inequality and racism, strengthen the economy, and promote global health. But the clock is ticking. Failure to address the climate crisis at the scale and speed necessary threatens the future of humanity.
All these challenges manifested themselves to certain degrees in our post school education and training sector, with negative impact on both the academic and training programme as well as student funding.

In response to COVID-19, we collectively developed, through the Ministerial Task Team on COVID-19, both health and safety measures to ensure that we mitigate the risks associated with contracting the disease.

We have committed ourselves to, firstly, lower the infection curve. Secondly, to save the 2020 academic year and thirdly, to avoid worsening the infection curve.

To this extent, we have been relatively successful in our effort. I therefore would like to thank SACPO for walking with us throughout this difficult journey.

Another challenge confronting us as a country and the PSET sector are the growing incidents of Gender-based violence (GBV) which is a profound and widespread problem in South Africa, impacting on almost every aspect of our life, and is essentially another pandemic.

Today, I would like to challenge all gathered here to collectively challenge the patriarchal power structures which dominate many structures in our societies, in which male leadership is seen as the norm, with men hold the majority of power.

We need to fight this abnormality within the PSET sector by developing deliberate programmes with clear goals and objective to ensure gender
representation in the composition of all the structures in the management and student leadership strata.

I must indicate that I am pleased in the manner in which the our PSET sector and TVETs in particular embraced the values of solidarity in confronting COVID-19 by ensuring that no student is left behind, and that all our PSET institutions are safe and do not pose the risk for the transmission of the virus.

Today as we gather here, our TVET students are almost at the end of writing their 2020 final examinations. Congratulations to SACPO, the lecturers and all the students.

Had it not been of the SACPO working together with our TVET Branch to develop collective multi-modal remote learning support plans, including the provision of government sponsored data to students for three months, we would be finding ourselves in a more difficult situation than we currently are.

Ladies and gentlemen

This year on the 09 June 2020, when I addressed the phased launch of the Huawei Academy in partnership with SACPO, I indicated that our strategic goal and objective is to help create a capable workforce that should support an inclusive growth path to meet the needs of our society, especially those of our economy.

The Technical and Vocational Education is a vital component of our post school and training system due to its importance in helping students to
develop the technical and practical skills needed to improve their livelihoods and to be competitive in today's ever-changing world.

The TVET sector must therefore embrace the latest National List of Occupations in High Demand (OIHD) in South Africa which I publicly and recently announced.

The list reflects the work undertaken by the DHET, through the Labour Market Intelligence research programme, to support human resource development in our country.

In this list, we have identified 345 occupations that are in high demand out of a total of 1 500 registered in our Organising Framework for Occupations.

This list is updated every two years, and marks an important step towards helping us understand better the needs of the labour market and signals opportunities where our students and graduates are likely to stand a better chance of finding employment.

This list tells us which occupations are likely to have what vacancies and which occupations are likely to grow due to new investments, especially by government.

Many of the occupations on the list can be associated with key areas and sectors identified as crucial for the Reconstruction and Recovery Plan as announced by President Ramaphosa, such as the digital economy, energy, infrastructure development, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture, data scientists, web developer, computer network
technician, electrical engineer, concentrated solar power process controller, mechatronic technician, toolmaker, gaming worker, crop produce analyst, agricultural scientist, just to name a few.

I want to reiterate my call to the TVET Colleges and off-course our friends and partner, Huawei, to use this list to inform their selection of programme offerings, their resource allocations and enrolment planning processes, as well as the identification and development of new qualifications and programmes that are more responsive to the needs of the economy and society as a whole.

Ladies and gentlemen

Today I remain honoured that the Huawei ICT Academy, which is a non-profit partnership program that authorises our universities and TVET colleges to deliver Huawei Certification courses to their students, continues to record significant successes.

This program acts as a bridge between enterprises and academy to build a talent ecosystem for the ICT industry, and is a wonderful example of college-industry partnership that is so vital for our vocational education and skills development system.

The programme has been designed to deliver standard certification courses required by the employers. These courses prepare our students with the latest technology and practical skills to work in the ICT industry, making them more employable and help kick start their careers.
Since the beginning of ICT Academies at TVET Colleges in 2019, we have 32 Colleges participating in the academies with 56 instructors trained, 8 instructors certified, 184 students trained and 8 students certified.

Both our academic institutions and students benefit enormously from this programme.

Amongst others, the Huawei ICT Academy provide free Huawei Certified Academy Instructor (HCAI) training and certification for two instructors for each technology pathways and also provides for students not only to learn theoretical knowledge but also improve hands-on practical abilities and it is closely related to actual working scenarios which ensure that students meet the requirements of their job in ICT industries.

I am grateful that SACPO and Huawei signed a Memorandum of Understanding to roll out these ICT academies in all 50 Colleges by 2021.

I therefore would like to encourage all the College principals to work with Huawei to strengthen this initiative in a mutually benefit of all parties involved.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the TVET College/s, instructors and students to be honoured with certificates today.

Amongst the certificates to be issued is the HUAWEI ICT Academy Certificate Plague Awarding, Certified Instructor Certificate Awarding and Five Excellent Student Awarding. Once more congratulations to all of you.
For those of you who I might not have the opportunity to meet again this year, let me also take this opportunity to wish all who celebrate Christmas a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year 2021.

Ensure that you keep all the COVID-19 protocols. If there is anything this pandemic has taught us, it is the danger of becoming complacent.

Across the world, countries with declining infections have eased restrictions only to experience a second, even more severe wave, forcing them to reimpose restrictions on movement, gatherings and economic activity.

We can also reduce infection risk by wearing a mask, wash hands regularly, avoid handshaking, keeping our vehicle windows open, keep our gatherings small, have them outside or in well ventilated venues, and ensure our physical distancing.

Unless we take personal responsibility for our health and the health of others, more people are going to become infected.

Most of all we owe it to ourselves and each other, because this affects us all.

Thank you