President and members of the South African College Principal’s Organisation (SACPO);
Members of TVET CGC;
DHET Senior Officials;
TVET College Officials;
Distinguished guests;
Programme Director;

Fight against COVID 19

We are meeting today as we battle the COVID-19 unprecedented challenges. As a Post School education and training system (PSET) we have
been intensely engaging with all our stakeholders to save the 2020 academic year whilst ensuring the simultaneously save lives.

This task was not going to be possible without the support of SACPO and the entire TVET sector, including our external partners.

As the TVET Colleges we must therefore join forces to come up with practical programmes in support of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and the new economic recovery plan.

This sector must therefore use the challenges of COVID-19 to work with the TVET Branch of our department and other agencies of government to accelerate the pace and scope of technological innovation in the curricula of colleges to embrace the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

Our Department of Higher Education and Training was established in 2009, with its primary goal being to provide education and training opportunities to all South Africans who are out of school (whether they attended school or not) to acquire further education and skills they require.

In this task we are guided by our White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, which was adopted by Cabinet in 2013, and we hope all members are familiarizing themselves with.

This is our guide that will catalyse faster movement forward to meet our National Development Plan (NDP) targets.
Our strategic goal and objective is to help create a capable workforce that will support an inclusive growth path to meet the needs of our society, especially those of our economy.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training has become 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 in the growth and development of our economy in today’s ever-changing world.

**TVET’s contribution to sustainable development and internal collaboration**

In line with President's announcement during the State of the Nation Address, we are aggressively positioning our colleges as the main platform of delivery for skills development training.

We must work collectively to dispel the perception of colleges as a “consolation prize” to university entrance and make them institutions of choice. I am saying this fully aware that the difficulties experienced in this sector are enormous though, working together, we can address these and build a sector that we can all be proud of.

We must also ensure that our colleges respond adequately to the President’s call for a national spatial development strategy based on systematic planning and implementation around the forty-four (44) District Municipalities and eight (8) Metros of our country.
Our colleges will ensure that our aim of ensuring that within the next 10 years there is no district municipality that will not have access to a post school training institution, is realised. This, in my view, would be a major development in the struggle to overcome the spatial legacies of under-development inherited from the apartheid and colonial system.

More importantly, we must ensure that the alignment of Higher Education and Training with Science and Innovation benefits the TVET sector greatly by ensuring that the sector finds innovative ways in operations and in offering improved curriculum in line with the dictates of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Our colleges must therefore ensure that they infuse advances in artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, the Internet of Things (IoT), 3D printing, genetic engineering, quantum computing, and other technologies in their curriculum.

I have already instructed our Department of Science and Innovation to resource and fund innovation in the TVET College sector. I invite SACPO to actively partner with me in ensuring that we drive innovation in the sector. And I want ideas from you on how best can we turn our colleges into centres of excellence in both skills development and innovation.

If our colleges take advantage of this perfect storm of technologies brought by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we will continue to ensure that our colleges remain relevant and these changes will bring transformative
changes in the way our colleges will attract the academic staff, students and forge futuristic relations with the business sector.

It therefore becomes important that our colleges must have formidable relationships with the Department of Science and Innovation. I have already directed both the Director-Generals to ensure that work is done in this regard.

Part of this work is to ensure that the TVET College sector collaborates with our SETAs to pull their data together so as to maximize skills development especially through work integrated learning.

This is what we call Big data analytics, which is often a complex process of examining large and varied data sets, or big data, to uncover information -- such as hidden patterns, unknown correlations, market trends and customer preferences.

This will help our organisations to make informed decisions, such as new revenue streams for our colleges, better prioritization of skills offerings, more effective marketing, better customer service, improved operational efficiency and competitive advantages of each college.

I am setting up a process to investigate and conceptualise a new data and information systems that will be common to both TVET colleges and SETAs. This includes forging multiple strategic partnerships with the SETAs and the private sector to broaden and diversify the skills development experiences of learners more closely related to the changing nature of industrial workplaces.
Critically important are the relations that TVET colleges must build with universities, particularly universities of technology and comprehensive universities to promote innovation platforms. In addition bridges must be built around which TVET colleges can provide practical support for emerging and new firms, SME's and cooperatives, in critical areas such as agriculture and agribusiness, renewable energy, low cost, high quality housing infrastructure, oceans economy, amongst others.

By working with universities, you will ensure that you create a single integrated, but differentiated national TVET cyber-infrastructure to support hybrid (digital-physical) and open-learning programmes for those unable to study full-time at TVET Colleges.

**Forging strategic partnerships with the private sector**

In South Africa the involvement of the private sector in skills development is critical because the private sector is the biggest source of employment and an enabler of funding for training in South Africa through taxes and other financial schemes. However, we need to ensure that with the rise of a global knowledge economy, we need to intensify our strategic partnerships that go beyond the traditional funding of discrete college projects.

Bold and visionary partnerships between industry and colleges will ensure that we accelerate innovation and help deliver solutions to pressing social and economic challenges in our country. One such exemplary partnership is
that between Huawei and some of our TVET colleges. We need more of such college industry partnerships.

Collaborating with industry should be interconnected to a redefinition of the role of the colleges for the 21st century especially as we still grapple with the concepts of the Fourth Industrial revolution which has the potential to completely overhaul our TVET’s curricula.

I am also pleased to report to this NGC that I have signed with the German Advisor for African Affairs, a Joint Initiative on the promotion of skills development, on the occasion of Germany Chancellor Angela Merkel’s visit to South Africa on the 6th February 2020.

Our partnership with the Germans seeks to help South Africa to build a modern, high quality and agile skill/s development system that is aligned with the needs of the 21st century.

This includes the development of occupational profiles, training standards, teaching materials and opportunities for in-company training as well as improved training for teaching personnel.

Germany’s dual vocational education and training system is highly recognised worldwide due to its combination of theory and training embedded in a real-life work environment. The German system also relies on close cooperation between employers and labour unions.
The German government and German industry in South Africa is committed to strengthen our Vocational Education and Training (VET) and to improve skills development of South Africa’s youth through our Centres of Specialisation. So, we must ensure that we rollout the Centres of Specialisation (CoS) which prioritises training of our youth in artisan skills and the thirteen (13) priority trades/occupations.

I am also grateful for the partnership that between SACPO and HUAWEI in which 23 colleges have been enrolled as Huawei academies with more than 200 instructors currently being trained to offer Huawei Accredited courses. What is more gratifying is that Huawei will extend the training to students using their own resources until such time that our college instructors are ready to offer these programmes.

My dream is that of building a system closer to the German system, that the majority of TVET college student must already be employed as apprentices in various companies, and attend college as part of their theoretical work whilst practically involved in real work. This means we must work towards radically inverting the current model where student undertake theoretical work with no practical experience, with many of whom without ever getting that vital work experience. I firmly believe that in combining resources in the SETAs and the training budgets in both the private and public sectors we can achieve this objective.

This partnership will indeed ensure that we bridge the divide between the process of training and employment, between the classroom and the workplace.
We also must ensure that our TVET colleges play an important role in implementing and promoting sustainable development.

As we may know, sustainable development consists of three pillars: economic, socio-cultural, and environmental development, and these should be considered holistically and our TVET’s policy and practices should not neglect any of the three. This will also ensure that our colleges remains attractive for funding donors or investors.

As you may know, our infrastructure priority for our 6th administration includes the development of decent, affordable student housing for universities and TVET colleges.

As a department we have already made available through the College Infrastructure Efficiency Grant for maintenance, over R1 billion per year from 2018/19 to 2021/2022. This is being rolled-out in all fifty (50) TVET Colleges. However I am concerned that this maintenance programme is moving very slowly with large amounts remaining unspent and yet our colleges have serious infrastructure maintenance backlogs.

We have already made strides with nine (9) new campus sites under construction and scheduled for completion this year and will still award contracts for the construction of four (4) further new campus sites which includes Balfour, Giyani, Nkandla B and Vryheid. This includes the construction of a new campus site in Mitchells Plain this year.
As we seek to expand the TVET college system I am concerned at the dwindling leadership pipeline for the sector. As many of our experienced and seasoned Principals exit the system through retirement, in the main, we do not have a ready supply of competent managers to fill these gaps. Years of experience alone is not sufficient to deal with the complexities of TVET colleges.

We need institutional leaders who not only have a solid suite of management skills, but are highly conversant with innovation and technology, have a sound interest in and capability to use research in decision – making, have the necessary skills to engage with a diversity of stakeholders and be influencers in their right. This also means we need a new type of principal who is competent in these areas. New recruits must fit this criteria and those in the system must be developed to reach these levels.

Relations between SACPO and NSFAS

I would also like to encourage that SACPO continue to work with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme to implement decisions taken on the 17th February 2020 regarding the bursary administration process for TVET colleges.

This includes amongst others:

- the establishment of the TVET division in NSFAS which is dedicated to TVET bursary administration;
• encouraging students to apply timeously for NSFAS in order to avoid delays in the funding decision;
• commitment by SACPO and NSFAS to deal with TVET’s Historic debt; and the;
• the differentiated allowances between TVET students and University students.

The fight against corruption

One of the most important fight we must take up in earnest is the fight against corruption. I am concerned about the increasing number of threats directed at some of our senior administrators in our colleges by people who unscrupulously want to be given tenders. I will be engaging the Security cluster in government to help us fight this scourge.

Let us not succumb to these threats if we are to fight corruption so as to ensure that TVET colleges resources are used to train and equip our youth with requisite skills.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

Reflecting from what has been happening globally and locally, it is clear that TVET has gained momentum at the global, regional, and national levels.
This therefore needs proper response from all stakeholders in order to reap the potentials of TVET for contributing to socio-economic, and environmental sustainable development.

TVET must be able to anticipate and respond accordingly to technological advancements by offering relevant programmes, suitable curriculum, and new ways of teaching-learning and assessing the students. Working and living in global community, TVET should not only prepare the graduates for the local and national job market but also regional and global.

However it is not adequate for colleges to simply respond to new technological developments, but colleges must themselves be sources of new innovations, and be creators of new knowledge.

All the above will also affect the way the TVET sector is planned and run. We cannot ignore the fact that humans have made significant progress in technological developments but at the same time we must not lose sight of the accompanying damage to the environment that we have seen. Pandemics like the Covid 19 that we are going through now can be directly traced to the ecological damage visited upon Mother Earth. Therefore, the issue of environmental sustainability must be an integral component of college curricula.

TVET colleges as the major producer of a skilled workforce must play a crucial role in promoting sustainable development, innovation, creating a workforce that support green technologies.
With these words, I wish you a successful National General Council.

Thank you

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