

**OPENING REMARKS BY DEPUTY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT THE HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING, EKURHULENI WEST COLLEGE, GERMISTON CAMPUS,**

**6 NOVEMBER 2015**

Welcome and we thank you for joining us for this HRDC meeting.

 We meet in the wake of protests at universities across our country at proposed fee increases.

 Underlying these protests is a desire to access education and to do so in an environment conducive for learning and teaching.

 It arises from an expectation among the youth of this country that education should be made available to all.

 The force and urgency of the protests arise from the lived experience of students, particularly those from poor backgrounds.

 It reflects their day-to-day struggles, not only to receive a quality education, but to be able to afford the basic necessities of life.

 These events call to mind the words of Njabulo Ndebele, who wrote:

*“Surely the children of the masses are destined to invade the universities. To recognise this fact is to appreciate that at this historical juncture the issue is not [so much about] academic standards, nor is it university autonomy, or freedom of speech: we waste our time when we debate these issues outside an appropriate historical and social context... The fundamental issue is the education of the mass. The issue is the democratisation of education and the process by which education is acquired and disseminated such that those who were deprived of the opportunity to know can have access to knowledge.”*

 As the HRDC, we are uniquely placed to make a contribution to the call for an affordable and better resourced higher education sector.

 We are called upon to deepen and enhance our work as a Council.

 We are called up to re-focus our efforts and to align our programme with the needs of the country.

 We should proceed with deliberation and urgency.

 We should proceed in a comprehensive manner, understanding the all-embracing nature of human capital development.

 As we consider measures to address the higher education sector, we should not lose sight of other critical areas.

 We need equally to resource, strengthen and capacitate other areas such as early childhood development, basic education, vocational education and training, adult basic education and worker education and training.

 In this, we are guided by Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa, which is intended to ensure a coordinated approach to meeting the country’s current and future skills needs.

 The strategy aims to focus the efforts of all stakeholders on the needs of the economy and the importance of supporting our industrialisation strategy to achieve inclusive growth and development.

 We know that quality education and increasing skills level are a key enabler of economic growth.

 Highly skilled people create jobs and suitably skilled people can be absorbed into employment when jobs are created. Entrepreneurs also create jobs.

 Skilled people can become self-employed and form income-generating entities that sustain livelihoods, and expand to provide employment opportunities.

Effective skills development depends on all parts of the system working effectively, and for the necessary linkages between its different parts to be enhanced.

 We have made significant progress in the last few years, particularly in expanding access at all levels of our education system.

 Ladies and Gentlemen,

 You will recall that when we last met we set out to clarify the role of the HRDC in relation to line departments that are responsible for both implementation and coordination.

 Our main item for discussion today is the Revised Human Resource Development Strategy.

 Council is expected to discuss the revised draft Strategy and approve the targets set for the period 2015 to 2020.

 We expect that this strategy will contribute to expanded access to quality education and training, delivered by effective teachers in functional institutions.

 It will contribute to improved learning outcomes.

 It will result in learners engaged in occupational qualifications who are able to access work-integrated learning opportunities, and graduates in occupational programmes who are able to gain work experience to meet the skills needs of the labour market.

 We expect the system to produce more academics and entrepreneurs, and more publications and better research.

 A more effective education and training and skills development system, situated within the broader economic and industrial development policies and strategies, will contribute to improvements in our human development index and economic competitiveness ranking.

 This meeting is also expected to deal with the conceptualisation of the Adopt-a-TVET College initiative.

 This initiative aims to identify industry partners to work with TVET colleges to address challenges of administration, management, governance and infrastructure and to build colleges of excellence.

By partnering colleges with companies on learning programmes, this initiative will ensure a supply of relevant high quality skills to respond to economic and social need of the country.

 It will contribute to the more effective absorption of TVET college graduates into the labour market through formalised apprenticeship and learnership arrangements.

 We will be making a call to companies across the country to become part of the skills revolution by partnering with TVET colleges.

By investing resources, skills, guidance and capabilities, these companies will be contributing to economic development while also establishing a pipeline of the skills they themselves need.

 Finally, we will discuss the PhD Employability Programme, and look at how HRDC can assist with repositioning the PhD as a critical asset to the South African economy.

 This is an import matter that is sure to advance our development and better our position in the innovation stakes.

 With these few words, I convey my good wishes for fruitful deliberations and once more thank you all for the work that you do to take South Africa forward.

 I thank you.

**ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENCY**

06 November 2015