

Programme Director Busi Mavuso

Honourable Minister of Employment and Labour Nomakhosazana Meth

Deputy Ministers Mgcina, Sibiyi and Godlimpi

Members of the portfolio committees

Nedlac Executive Director Lisa Seftel

Leaders of the Nedlac constituents

Deputy President Paul Mashatile (in absentia)

Representatives of the various African countries in attendance

Current and former Overall Convenors

Members of Media

Staff and Delegates

To be invited on this Nedlac special occasion to give a message of support is both a privilege and honour but also a challenge. I must thank both the Nedlac Executive Director and the former Labour Overall Convenor comrade EP (Ebrahim Patel) to delegate the task to me. I do have views as to why they decided so hoping it is not a conspiracy.

It is practically impossible to pay tribute to all former trade union leaders who made a contribution in the establishment of Nedlac.

It is equal not possible to speak about the Nedlac's 30 years journey in few minutes or hours because Nedlac's work speaks for itself. Volumes and volumes of reports, contribution on various socio-economic policies and legislative proposals which are available in the ILO, cabinet and parliament, libraries and media archives, even social media. It is work that many countries envy.

There are so many people that I hold them at high esteem for their roles in the establishment of Nedlac, nurturing it's journey at all the stages of it's development from the embryonic, teething and infant stages. Again, it is practically impossible to mention all of them but just a few:

President Mandela

His signing of the Nedlac Bill into law, making it an Act of Parliament made a solid foundation for the establishment of Nedlac. One wonders whether Nedlac would have survived the turbulent years of its growing had it not been an Act of Parliament.

Tito Mboweni, Johnson Gomomo and David Brink

The three prominent leaders representing government, Organised Labour and Business signed the Nedlac Founding Declaration paving the way of establishment of Nedlac whom today is 30 years of existence.

This is one document that I read time and time again. A very important document. I would urge all of you that whenever you have time read the Nedlac founding documents. Particularly the following clauses which I find interesting:

4.1 “ The minister of Labour will be the responsible Minister within government and will act as a link between government and the Council”

4.2 “ Government representation on the Council would include a core of Ministers and Deputy Ministers with their Directors General(Finance, Trade and Industry, Labour, Public Works and the Minister without Portfolio in the Office of the President)”

4.3 “ The South African Reserve Bank should also be involved in the Councilon the Public Finance and Monetary chamber)

Other Important Leaders

Bokie Botha, Lesley Boyd, Patrice Motsepe, Bobby Godsell, Sam Motsuenyane, Jay Naidoo, Kgalema Motlanthe, Hebert Mkhize, Jayendra Naidoo, Enock Godongwane, Phillip Dexter, Tony Ehrenreich, Pat Horn, Les Kettledas, Chez Milan, Dennis George, Cunningham Ngcukana, Mbazima Shilowa, Zwelinzima Vavi and Ebrahim Patel etc. Should I have time at the end of my input I would want to tell a story about Vavi and Patel on the shaping of Nedlac.

It is a norm that when organisations and institutions celebrate and commemorate their achievements the focus is on the leadership. Very little is said about those at the lower ranks, in fact on such occasions they do not exist and not recognised.

Let us, as we celebrate the 30 years of unbroken service on shaping and reshaping social dialogue in our country, recognise the Nedlac general worker, who clean the floors, open the windows for refreshing air, making tea, washing cups and dishes, transporting us from one point to the next.

Lets us put our hands together for the Nedlac constituencies' support staff, who ensures that chambers do meet, venues secured, document are available, transport logics and up to standard.

The work of Nedlac would be incomplete without those that I regard to be the oil in the Nedlac engine, those who are catalyst in ensuring that Nedlac produces the high quality consensus, the Nedlac Overall Convenors.

When deadlocks, stalemates and dilemmas are reached all eyes turn to the overall Convenors for a solution. In some instances they manage to find a common ground,

make it possible for those making policies and legislation to conclude the work. My little advice to the upcoming overall Convenors is this:

1. respect for one another, understanding that each constituent is different and have different needs.
2. Respect each other position no matter how ridiculous and disastrous it may sound.
3. Fights, disagreements in the boardroom, chambers and task teams are not permanent and should remain there.
4. Commit to find an amicable solution, bearing in mind that challenges in the social dialogue space are not insurmountable.
5. Arguments should be supported by research, facts and evidence.
6. Never be triumphalist when things go your way, remember it is influenced by the will of others to find an amicable solution.

As we celebrate the contribution of the former Overall Convenors, we should always remember that it is not an easy task. It needs to be handled with care and respect. At times your recommendation may not be accepted even by your own constituent.

Here are some of their contributions to come to mind just to mention a few:

- a) No sitting allowance for Nedlac meetings
- b) preparations and outcomes of the Growth and Development Summit
- c) South African Response to the Global Financial Crisis
- d) National Minimum Wage
- e) Rapid Covid-19 Response
- f) Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan
- g) Recommendation of candidate judges to the Labour courts

It has been the responsibility of an overall Convenor to push his or her constituents to work long hours without a break, for example during the preparation of the Growth and Development Summit. Persuading leaders of business and unions to available themselves to conclude the South African Response to the Global Financial Crisis on record time was a mountain to climb but it was done. Encouraging representatives to work after hours including weekend to process the National Minimum Wage under the leadership of then Deputy President Ramaphosa and working on the different working stream in the formulation of the ERRP was a daunting task, not to mention the 24/7 by the Rapid covid 19 response team.

Let me make this disclaimer that Labour has a fair in contribution to the sustainability of Nedlac in term of personnel. All the Nedlac Executive Directors are coming from Labour, two out of the four Ministers of Labour are from organised labour, almost all the government overall Convenors and some in the community constituency are from labour. The only constituency Labour has not influenced that much is Business.

To the Executive Director fly the Nedlac flag high by doing what is right, not what is easy , not what is popular.

To the overall Convenors, there are times when things would be tough but remember “ Rivers never go reverse, live like a river, forget the past and focus on the future. Always be positive “

All the best to the future.