

**COMMUNITY CONSTITUENCY MESSAGE TO THE
29th NEDLAC ANNUAL SUMMIT
FRIDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2024**

Programme Director

Deputy President, Minister of Employment and Labour, and the entire government delegation

We wish to convey our special warm welcome to the new Minister.

Leadership and delegates from other social partners representing Labour and Business

Former OCs of the Community Constituency

Leadership representing various sectors of civil society

Esteemed guests, ladies and gentlemen

In 2023 Statistics South Africa released the 2022 Census Report. The majority of the socio-economic indicators of the Census Report confirm that South Africa is in a better improved position than it was in 1993/94, challenges notwithstanding. This ushered the significant period of marking the 30 years of democracy since the 1994 democratic breakthrough. As the apex platform of social dialogue in South Africa, NEDLAC had meaningful engagements with both processes (2022 Census Report and 30 Years of Democracy).

In the year 2023/24, NEDLAC continued to deepen social dialogue in finding solutions to the socio-economic challenges of our country. Amongst others, the agenda of NEDLAC covered important policy issues including Employment Services Amendment Bill, Electricity Pricing Policy, Norms and Standards for Public Schools Infrastructure, National Water Resource Infrastructure Agency Bill.

NEDLAC further facilitated dialogue on critical themes such as Government Budget Planning, Indlulamithi Scenarios 2035, Employment Tax Incentive, Integrated Resource Plan, SMMEs and Cooperatives Funding Policy, Cost of Living, revamped Human Resource Development Strategy, amongst others.

It is of critical importance to acknowledge that the Governance Task Team concluded its long overdue work, leading to the adoption of the revised Constitution and NEDLAC Amendment Bill. This has enabled the streamlining and better functioning of NEDLAC governance structures. This is a step in the right direction towards building a structure of NEDLAC that is fit-for-purpose.

It is commendable that NEDLAC has achieved 15 of the 16 set targets of the Annual Performance Plan for the year under review, translating into 93% annual performance, which is a 14% positive improvement from 79% in the preceding year.

In the same period, the Community Constituency has been continuing with its endeavours of capacity building and repositioning its base as the broad representative voice of civil society in national platforms.

The Community Constituency has been consistent in convening its annual Policy School as a platform of broad base civil society organisations to account about the work of NEDLAC, consult and source mandate for the tasks ahead, and use the platform for strategic reflection and planning for the year ahead. We further boosted our operational capacity with the placement of five interns who are also exposed to the whole of NEDLAC work.

In the course of the year, the Community Constituency meaningfully participated in the following high-level activities, inter alia:

- With the support of the ILO, we hosted a capacity building workshop on Just Energy Transition
- 2nd Presidential Health Compact Summit
- International Research Conference on Skills for a Just Transition
- Hemp and Cannabis Phakisa Action Lab
- We hosted the AGOA Civil Society Forum, and participated in the main AGOA Summit

The Community Constituency had the honour of participating in a bilateral engagement with the Director General of the ILO, Gilbert F. Houngbo, to share notes on the work of civil society at NEDLAC, previous and future areas of collaboration with ILO. The ILO DG was specifically interested in exploring the role that can be played by civil society towards his call for “Building a Global Coalition for Social Justice”.

As broadly mandated by structures of civil society, the Community Constituency remains committed to champion its advocacy of critical socio-economic and long standing campaigns around education, skills development, economic growth and inclusion, job creation, increased support for cooperatives and the informal sector, anti-poverty, implementation of the NHI, graduating the SRoD into a Basic Income Grant, improved delivery of basic services, and the disciplined implementation of the Presidential Social Sector Framework Agreement.

In light of the electoral outcomes of the 2024 National and Provincial Elections, South Africa has been emerged with a Government of National Unity. The deliberations and recommendations of the 2023 National Dialogue on Coalition Governments must serve as a basis for building the structures, processes and work of the GNU. NEDLAC must take interest in entrenching democracy through social dialogue and civic education.

We welcome the issues that constitute the priority programme of the MTDP of the GNU focusing on:

- Inclusive Economic Growth and Job Creation
 - Address constraints
 - Anchor on Industrialisation
 - Place people at the centre (SMMEs, Cooperatives, Informal)
 - Localisation
 - Public Employment Programmes (Youth)
- Tackling Poverty and the High Cost of Living
- Building a Capable, Ethical, and Developmental State

It is important to acknowledge that there are both epistemic and ideological contestations about the concept of a developmental state.

As part of its core mandate, NEDLAC must rise to the occasion and lead the processes of the much-needed National Dialogue. These processes of engagement and social dialogue must go beyond the confines of the current NEDLAC structures to include all other necessary stakeholders in developing the social compact that will guide the work of the GNU in collaboration with all social partners. In the spirit of not leaving no one behind, the Community Constituency is already working on plans on undertaking wide community-based consultations in this regard.

We wish to thank the entire Secretariat of NEDLAC, especially our Constituency Coordinator Ms Rejoyce Mudzanani, for their continued support over this period. We further wish to acknowledge the leadership of civil society for the sense of agency they bring into our national discourse.

THULANI TSHEFUTA

OVERALL CONVENOR

NEDLAC COMMUNITY CONSTITUENCY (Civil Society)