

ADDRESS BY LES KETTLEDAS TO 29th
NEDLAC SUMMIT, 06 SEPTEMBER 2024
NH JOHANNESBURG HOTEL AND ONLINE

**ADDRESS BY MR. LES KETTLEDAS, FORMER
OVERALL GOVERNMENT CONVENOR, TO NEDLAC
ANNUAL SUMMIT 6 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**“NEDLAC: CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF SOCIAL
DIALOGUE AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE”**

Preamble-salutations. (assess if needed)

Programme Director

Our host today, the Executive Director of NEDLAC, Ms Lisa Seftel

(Honourable Deputy President Mr Paul Shikosa Mashatile)

Ministers and other Government leaders in our midst

His Excellency, Mr Gilbert Houngboa, the Director-General
of the International Labour Organization (ILO)

Representatives of Business

Representatives of organized labour

Representatives of community organizations and broader
civil society

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am honoured to join in “Celebrating the past 30years of NEDLAC”
2. Guided by the time given to us by the Programme Director, let me zoom into three areas 1. “The genesis or evolution of NEDLAC”. 2. Highlights or reflections on the road NEDLAC has travelled over the 30 years, and 3. Some thoughts on the future ahead and NEDLAC’s role

THE GENESIS/EVOLUTION OF NEDLAC

3. Upon the dawn of democracy in our country, in 1994, the first Minister of Labour Tito Mboweni led a tripartite delegation to the 81st session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva.
4. This event marked the 75th anniversary of the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and 50 years of the adoption of the historic Declaration of Philadelphia, in 1944.
5. It was at this historic occasion that South Africa was being re-admitted to the ILO after 30 years of absence because of its apartheid policies
6. Inspired by the significance of the event, Minister Mboweni remarked that as the 81st session of the conference charted its course “we in South Africa are mapping our own. The ILO principles of tripartism, social responsibility and social justice are our compass.”
7. When we returned to the country, with Minister Mboweni’s leadership, we proceeded with a flurry of activities that led to the institutionalization of tripartism in the country. Indeed, in establishing NEDLAC, we went a step further ensuring that organizations of community and development interests are also formally and equally involved.

THIRTY YEARS OF NEDLAC: SOME BRIEF REFLECTIONS

8. In the NEDLAC Founding Declaration the Social Partners identified three defining challenges facing the country to be
1. Sustainable economic growth, 2. Greater social equity,

- and 3. Increased participation - by all major stakeholders, in economic decision-making.
9. Unfortunately, thirty years later, these challenges remain with us for a variety of reasons though it is not for the lack of effort on the part of social partners represented at NEDLAC.
 10. It is commendable that MOST, if not ALL, significant socio-economic legislation has passed through the Nedlac structures over the years
 11. I wish to extend appreciation and gratitude to Ministers and Convenors that served in the various Chambers. The lead Ministers from the then Departments of Trade and Industry (DTI which is now DTIC), Public Works, Finance and Labour, and the individual Convenors, were responsible for the Trade and Industry, Development, Public Finance and Monetary Policy, and the Labour Market Chambers, respectively.
 12. These Chambers were the engine rooms for NEDLAC. The role of the lead Ministers was crucial as they played an important role in internalising the work of NEDLAC in their Departments and indeed, government.
 13. As we tabled and considered socio-economic policy with our social partners, the discussions were robust and debates often fierce
 14. It was useful that we had a Committee of Principals, who were the leaders of each Constituency, and always ready to step in and assist in dispute resolution among the social partners
 15. As we review NEDLAC's achievements or challenges over the past 30 years and its future role, I think it is also incumbent upon us to give attention to the wider dissemination of NEDLAC's work at the provincial and local government levels.
 16. Promoting or fostering social dialogue at the subnational level could support more effective policy

formulation and implementation thus leading to improved development outcomes in our country.

17. NEDLAC has not been a waste of time or resources.
18. It is heartening to see reports showing that the satisfaction of stakeholders in the work of NEDLAC averages 73%

On the Future

19. I fully agree with the sentiments shared by others that we need NEDLAC to continue to succeed in these uncertain and difficult times
20. The structures, including the Chambers, Management Committees, and Executive Council need to be strongly capacitated.
21. The NEDLAC Convenors need to be properly mandated so that this can speed up processes and avoid logjams. Similarly, the Committee of Principals needs to continue to play a role in unblocking these logjams or resolving disputes when they arise
22. Fortunately, the social partners have seen to it that there are moves to make Nedlac a “fit for purpose” entity that is also agile.
23. I wish to join in congratulating and acknowledge the progress made on a revised NEDLAC Bill, Constitution and protocol for considering issues at NEDLAC.

CONCLUSION

24. In closing, I wish to pay tribute to government leaders over the past 30 years. These include the former Presidents and Deputy Presidents who addressed and chaired the annual NEDLAC Summits.
25. I wish to thank the lead Ministers and government representatives who engaged the work of NEDLAC and supported it in its approach to deliver on its mandate
26. I also wish to thank the overall convenors of the social partners for the role they have played in steering NEDLAC over time.
27. The success of NEDLAC over these past 30 years would not have been achieved without the industrious and hardworking Secretariat under the different Executive Directors
28. It is because of you that today we are able to truly celebrate the countless efforts to turn the dream of social dialogue in our participatory democracy a concrete reality

Thank you
