



Address by Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa at the 5th Expanded Public Works Programme Summit, St Georges Hotel, Irene...

Date: Tuesday, November 16, 2016

Programme Director, Ministers,
Deputy Ministers and MECs,
Members of the Portfolio Committee on Public Works,
Executive Mayors and senior government officials,
Representatives of the International Labour Organisation,
Representatives of social partners,
EPWP participants,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Every day, all across South Africa, tens of thousands of our people are going out to build a new country.

They are paving roads and growing food.

They are clearing alien vegetation and fighting fire.

They are cultivating young minds and caring for the sick.

They are building school desks and keeping public spaces clean.

Through their efforts, they are changing our country for the better.

They are learning to be builders, artisans, pharmacy assistants, fire fighters, adult educators and carers.

They are acquiring the skills our country needs and the practical experience that prospective employers seek.

They are not merely numbers on a spreadsheet, part of our effort to reach the magic figure of 6 millions work opportunities.

These people are – each and every one of them – a national asset.

They represent the potential of our people and the hope for our future.

They are the reason we are gathered here at this summit.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Expanded Public Works Programme is a driver of change and a potent force for social inclusion.

It is a valued intervention aimed at creating work in an environment of chronic joblessness.

It provides opportunities to our youth, women and rural poor, who bear the brunt of low economic growth and unemployment.

This programme seeks to provide modest income to struggling and impoverished households in the short to medium term.

At the heart of this programme is the provision of training to those who participate in it.

It is about empowering residents in villages, informal settlements and townships with skills they can use beyond the life of a project.

It recognises that participants are valued members of communities who contribute to development and social cohesion.

It recognises that inclusive economic growth and democratic participation are best advanced through strong partnerships between government, development organisations and citizens.

Nowhere is the value of partnership between government and civil society more pronounced or more compelling than in the Community Work Programme and the NPO programme.

Through the mobilisation of public resources, EPWP participants contribute to the delivery of community services and the provision of public assets.

The programme targets labour-intensive sectors to absorb as many young people and women into productive work.

Public employment programmes are not only about changing the built landscape of our country.

They are also about the wellbeing, education and safety of our people.

Through the social sector programmes, participants provide services in early childhood development, community safety and community based care.

Critical to the success of this work are the many community based organisations and NGOs with whom government partners.

There are also numerous opportunities for enterprise development within the programme.

The 'treeprenuer' programme, for example, encourages communities to grow trees.

These are bought by government office, companies and contractors to improve the environment and prevent soil erosion while generating income for these communities.

The Department of Public Works has qualified officials available to assist individuals and co-operatives conceptualise and implement profitable business ideas.

But more should be done to capitalise on such opportunities.

We need to encourage greater collaboration between individuals, co-operatives, small businesses and Public Works to ensure that entrepreneurs succeed and thrive within the programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is a timely Summit aimed at deepening social justice and advancing social protection of South Africa's vulnerable and poor.

It is a gathering whose urgent task is to enhance the capacity of our state to efficiently deliver work opportunities.

This is because public employment programmes are a critical part of a developmental state – and the capacity of the developmental state is critical to the success of these programmes.

Our Constitution enjoins all of us to work in partnership to free the potential of each person.

It requires that a high standard of professional ethics must be supported and maintained in the public service.

It says that efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted.

Drawing from the Constitution, our National Development Plan says we must build the capability of the state to play a transformative role.

The NDP speaks of the need for public institutions to be better managed, direct resources more efficiently, reduce wastage and eradicate corruption and mismanagement.

These public institutions need to be more accountable, more responsive to the needs of the people, more transparent and more effective at drawing on the resources and capabilities that exist outside government.

We are making important progress in developing the capacity of the state to monitor and evaluate the provision of services.

We must also make sure that monitoring and evaluation becomes a cornerstone of the EPWP.

We must institutionalise the planning function and enhance synergies across all spheres of government and state owned enterprises.

Public employment initiatives will be with us for some time.

We must ensure that they are not only large in scale, but that they are also qualitative, long term and sustainable.

The NDP says that:

“Even if South Africa achieves GDP growth above 5 percent a year and employment rises rapidly over the next decade, there will still be a need for such programmes.”

That is why this Summit needs to give close attention to how to improve the performance of the EPWP and better leverage the resources we have.

We commend the Department of Public Works for the valuable information that it has already gathered – and is ready to share – on the challenges and opportunities of the EPWP.

The insights gathered from participants, mentors, trainers, administrators and interest groups provide a rich perspective on the lived experience of the EPWP.

Challenges around project identification, selection of participants, reporting and budgets have been thoroughly explored, resulting in standard guidelines to promote consistency and deepen impact.

Strengthening of institutional capacity must be at the centre of our implementation efforts.

Public employment programmes cannot be separated from our broader strategies for economic growth and social development.

We need to do more to use public employment programmes to support and enhance the work being done in other areas to create jobs and reduce poverty.

We need to better integrate the activities of public employment programmes with our national skills development strategy, with our food security and nutrition programmes, with the work we are doing with business and labour leaders to establish a mass internship programme.

We need to look at how the private sector can contribute to the effectiveness of public employment programmes and how they can more effectively benefit from them.

We have done much to explore such linkages, but there is much more we can do.

The potential for public employment as an economic enabler is vast.

We must therefore depart here having agreed that we have an urgent task to institutionalise the EPWP within each implementing public body.

We have been entrusted with the responsibility to defeat poverty, unemployment, inequality and underdevelopment.

I have full confidence in all of you that at the end of the Summit you will be encouraged and more determined to improve the lives of the millions of youth and rural women who still languish in poverty and deprivation.

Your hard work, determination and care will bring hope to our people.

It will make our nation see, feel and experience – and value – all of our public employment programmes.

I wish you a successful Summit.

I thank you.

Issued by: **The Presidency**