



Office of the Premier

North West Provincial Government
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



SPEECH BY NORTH WEST PREMIER, PROF TEBOGO JOB MOKGORO, AT THE 6TH ANNUAL SOUTH AFRICA UNESCO ENGINEERING CONFERENCE HELD AT THE NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY MAHIKENG CAMPUS ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2019

Programme Director, Mr Cecil Masoka

Deputy Vice Chancellor of the North West University, Prof Boitumelo Setlالتها

The Director General of the Department of Science and Technology, Dr Phil Mjwara

Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the National Research Foundation, Dr Gansen Pillay

Chief Executive Officer of the Engineering Council of South Africa, Mr Siphon Madonsela

Representatives of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research

Conference delegates

Members of the academia and research institutions

Engineering students from various institutions of higher learning

Distinguished guests

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning and welcome to the North West Province.

We are indeed honoured and humbled to be part of this South African UNESCO Conference; whose sole aim is to bring together all role players from various engineering fields and related disciplines to seek ways and means addressing the engineering skills deficit in South Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen, recent reports point to the fact that our country is grappling with an acute shortage of skills in various key and strategic economic sectors due to a growing and serious mismatch between the skills demanded by the economy and those in supply.

The South African Engineering Sector is not immune to this phenomenon; the entire globe is affected but that does not mean we have to sit on our laurels and not do anything to address this problem.

Ladies and gentlemen, according to the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (MERSSETA), the shortage of highly skilled individuals is one of the factors that have contributed to the slow adoption of technology, lower productivity, low competitiveness and high production costs in our country.

Furthermore, we have, as a country, been found not to be training enough engineers, artisans as well as technicians to deliver our strategic infrastructure projects as envisaged in the National Development Plan to be able to give the much needed boost to our ailing economy.

It is therefore very pleasing to see that our government, jointly with the private sector as well as institutions of higher learning and research, respond to the challenges facing the engineering sector through forums such as this conference that is about to get underway.

According a report by the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of Southern Africa, , for one “to understand the state of the engineering profession in South Africa, it is important to consider the sectors in which engineers engage”.

The report stated that “in a broad sense, engineers are at the core of two key areas of development in the country: building and maintaining infrastructure in the public sector, and contributing towards economic growth in the private sector. These are fundamentally different contexts in terms of the kind of engineering work undertaken and the conditions of employment”.

It is common knowledge therefore that municipal engineers are responsible for the provision of roads, communication, bulk services as well as electricity; civil engineers will be responsible for construction and upkeep of urban development road infrastructure while industrial engineers perform a wide range of functions in consulting firms, small commercial enterprises or large multinational companies.

I am stating these examples to signify the important role that engineering and engineers play in our everyday lives; therefore making it a very important government responsibility to ensure that corporates and institutions of higher learning and research invest in the training and development of more engineers, artisans and technicians to contribute towards the acceleration of the economy.

It is therefore going to be very important, as we go forward, that the discussions that will ensue throughout the two days of this conference should be able to take advantage of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to unlock the challenges currently facing the economy in general and the

engineering sector in particular; your resolutions and decisions emanating from this conference should be those that are aimed solely at addressing the identified deficits in the engineering space that continue to be stumbling blocks to the growth of our economy.

It should therefore be very critical that we embrace the advantages and opportunities that come with the Fourth Industrial Revolution in relation to new engineering and scientific innovations to unlock the economy.

Conference delegates, the North West Provincial Government has also taken an initiative to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the North West University to cooperate in various fields and disciplines of common national interest so as to grow the North West Province through Skills Development Programmes.

We therefore commit ourselves to will closely monitor the discussions of this conference because central to our development as the 6th Provincial Administration, is the massification of our infrastructure development programme that I committed to implement fully during the recent State of the Province Address following the 2019 General Elections.

Ladies and gentlemen, with those few words, allow me to welcome you all to our city and university premises but moreover, we want to wish you a very successful conference.

I thank you.

Ends