

28th NEDLAC ANNUAL SUMMIT
08 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT GHALLAGHER ESTATE

Opening Address: TW Nxesi MP
Minister of Employment and Labour

Protocol:

Programme Director, Ms. Zingiswa Losi, COSATU
President

Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, His
Excellency Paul Mashatile,

Ministers and Deputy Ministers present here,

The Directors General

Overall Conveners' and leaders of business, labour and
community

NEDLAC and Presidential Climate Committee Executive
Directors

Members of the Portfolio Committee

Distinguished guests

Members of the media

1. It gives me great pleasure to once more deliver the opening address at this gathering, the Annual Summit of one of the most stable and respected institutions associated with my department, Nedlac. Thank you for the invitation and I welcome you all to the second physical Annual Summit of Nedlac since the pandemic. A special welcome to the Deputy President, His Excellency Paul Mashatile, who will be attending and addressing a Nedlac Summit for the first time.
2. A further welcome to the Presidential Climate Change (PCC) Commissioners present here. The PCC is also a social partner body, which has found a home in Nedlac, up until such time as the Climate Change Bill is passed and it has set up its own institutional home. In the meantime, we welcome you to the Nedlac family and hope that both you and Nedlac gain from the synergies between us in relation to social partnering and climate change.
3. And lastly, a welcome to a new entrant to Nedlac, the South African Federation of Trade Unions. Saftu has met the requirements to become part of organised

labour. I hope that your entrance will contribute to enriching and deepening debates in Nedlac.

4. I appreciate the two-fold nature of this Annual Summit – to firstly reflect on Nedlac’s performance and secondly to consider the topical issue of how social partners should respond individually and collectively to crisis-type situations – whether they are climate-induced, of unknown origin like earthquakes or, as a result of failing infrastructure or outbreaks that are not in our control.
4. To turn first to Nedlac’s performance in the 2022/23 Financial Year. The Annual Report which has been circulated here will soon be tabled in Parliament and it reflects a job well done and an organisation well managed. If members here present do not know, Nedlac received an unqualified audit with fewer findings than in previous years. Congratulations! The audit opinion read with the Nedlac performance report is welcome. We must continue to improve performance.
5. Over the last year, Nedlac has been able to stabilise and move back to its pre-eminent role of focusing on

inputting into draft policy and legislation. This year you have commented on legislation which is sorely needed to change our economic trajectory including relating to electricity and procurement. You have also considered bills relating to gender-based violence and education, all pressing issues facing us.

6. Unfortunately, there is one area of work in Nedlac where progress is just too slow and that is the area of labour market reform. In early 2021, after business, labour and government had tabled their proposals for labour law reform, I had hoped that within six or eight months, we would have reached an agreement on a number of changes that would improve the efficiency of the labour market without disturbing worker rights. Some of the amendments proposed by the parties included improving the functioning of the Labour Court and collective bargaining which ensure that in practice, the rights of workers are realised. However, the process is ongoing and we are now too late for this parliamentary cycle. I hope however, that you continue to make progress and use this opportunity

of extra time to extend the ambit of your deliberations. This should include considering extending the rights of workers in non-standard employment relations e.g. Gig economy workers and situations of remote work in the advent of the changing world of work.

7. While shifting back to inputting into laws and policy, you have not neglected more pressing and urgent issues which require collaboration between social partners. As part of this Summit, you are launching a report on the work you did when you set up a rapid response task team during the Covid-19 pandemic sub-titled “Learning the lessons, creating a legacy”. Last year you tried to extend that rapid response approach to high food and fuel prices. This is also an important issue that social partners should remain seized with – both seeking ways to address high prices and mitigating the impact on hunger and poverty.
8. Nedlac has also made progress on “becoming fit for purpose”. This has involved a review of the Nedlac Act, Constitution and protocols which govern how

social partners work at Nedlac. I hope that the revised Protocol approved earlier in the year, is assisting social partners to add more value to processes. The stronger the processes are to discuss laws and policy in Nedlac, the more likely it will be that you can influence changes down the line, including in Parliament.

7. I understand that the revisions to the Constitution and Bill, which have to be finally signed off on by the Nedlac Exco in October, will make the long-awaited changes to issues of representativity in Nedlac. The changes put in place stronger procedures to broaden Nedlac's reach without diminishing the stature of the significant stakeholders in the economy and labour market.
8. The second focus of this Summit is on social partners responding and building resilience to perilous and crisis-type situations. Just two months ago, we all watched in horror as a part of Bree (now Lilian Ngoyi) Street in Johannesburg collapsed and the inner city was left without services for many days as different

parts of government sought to work out the cause and the most appropriate response.

9. Whether these events are natural, man-made or climate-induced – which at some point was man-made, we have to accept them as part of our new normal. We need to plan better and be more prepared. In my own Department, it requires us to have new approaches to occupational health and safety as the scope of health and safety disasters increases. I thus welcome the focus of this Summit on the sharing of lessons between social partners on how to build resilience when responding to crisis-type situations.
10. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity and continue to function and thrive despite the challenges we face. It's the ability to adapt and overcome obstacles, to find new solutions and opportunities, and to keep moving forward. It's not about avoiding challenges, but rather about having the skills and resources to deal with them when they arise. If through collaboration at Nedlac, we can build greater resilience amongst ourselves and in society,

it is to be welcomed.

10. Whether we call what we do social compacting, partnering or collaborating, I continue to believe that Nedlac shines a beacon of light, and brings a message of hope in these times, which can often be seen as dark and unpredictable. I wish you well in your Summit and in your future deliberations at Nedlac and would like to thank my government colleagues, the social partners and the secretariat for their ongoing contributions to Nedlac,
11. But before I step off the platform, I have one last task to do and that is to introduce His Excellency, Deputy President Paul Mashatile.

Introduction of the Deputy President:

As you all know, DP Mashatile was Minister of Arts and Culture and before that, he was Premier of Gauteng and in several other capacities as MEC and Deputy Minister.

Prior to his public service responsibilities in Gauteng and in the National Government, he has served the country as a political activist. His profile from his youth days during apartheid is rich and shows his commitment to building a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic, and prosperous South Africa. A deeper look at Deputy President Paul Mashatile tells the story of a dedicated, experienced and politically mature leader.