

COMMUNITY CONSTITUENCY INPUT TO THE 2023 NEDLAC ANNUAL SUMMIT

Acknowledge already established protocols.

We welcome the opportunity to participate in this 28th NEDLAC Annual Summit under the theme: “Resilience in the face of adversity: Social Partners' Preparedness to manage crises”

Various aspects of our national life have rolled over from crisis to crisis in many fronts but we are still standing. Social dialogue, compacting and collaborative efforts have been some of the contributors to finding solutions to our challenges. This should be an acknowledgement that as Social Partners we should have different but complementary roles in response to crises and national development.

In circumstances of crises, community based CSOs should be supported to provide immediate responsive interventions. If left to government alone, some of these interventions may be trapped in bureaucracy right from inception and be rendered too late if not redundant.

NEDLAC continues to redefine and assert its role as the centre of social dialogue in South Africa. In pursuit of repositioning its relevance, NEDLAC continues to take up on tasks and roles that far exceed its legislated founding mandate. There is no living organism that remains static.

In the 2022/23 Financial Year, NEDLAC has been seized with various issues of national importance where social partners combined their efforts to find solutions to the pressing national challenges. In this period, NEDLAC convened dialogue sessions focusing on issues such as government budget planning, electricity generation, public employment schemes and food distribution to vulnerable groups and communities.

The Development Chamber and other Joint Chamber Task Teams further dealt with issues of strategic interest to the people and communities such as the White Paper on

Social Development, National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Draft Bill (NCGBVF), Amendments to the Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure, Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme and the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention.

Furthermore, NEDLAC Reports were concluded on ten Bills and policies while five engagements were still ongoing by the end of the reporting period. A new Rapid Response Task Team was established to focus on the increasing cost-of-living.

In this period, NEDLAC had a total of sixteen (16) planned targets in the Annual Performance Plan (APP) for the 2022/23 financial year, of which two (2) were not applicable. Therefore, the organisation achieved 11 out of the 14 applicable targets, translating into 78,5% performance with an **Unqualified Audit opinion**. Compared to the previous Financial Year's 66% performance, this signals a 12% improvement, which is greatly commended.

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. We were able to convene a workshop to consider the implementation modalities of the Presidential Social Sector Summit agreement.

The Community Constituency concluded the 2022/23 year by hosting its annual civil society policy school that was held on 29 - 31 March 2023 under the theme "Building and repositioning the civil society voice for advancing socioeconomic transformation". The policy school was attended by a broad range of national civil society formations across various sectors of organising. The policy school is convened as a platform where we account to our constituency about the NEDLAC work of the ending year, consult and source mandate on the work of the new year. It also serves as a platform of strategic planning for the work programme of the Community Constituency for the year ahead.

In the 2022 State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa challenged the NEDLAC Social Partners to work on a new consensus and develop a Social Compact by asserting “We have given ourselves 100 days to finalise a comprehensive social compact to grow our economy, create jobs and combat hunger”. It is important to acknowledge that collectively, we have not risen up to this challenge, despite the crucial mandate it entails in responding to the multiple and intersectional crises confronting our society. We believe that social partners can still commit to collective actions to achieve higher levels of investment and growth, increase employment, expand support for the unemployed and tackle poverty.

Poverty is real and deepening. It must feature prominently in our national agenda and NEDLAC.

In order to unleash our potential to attract investments, grow the economy, create employment, and fight poverty, we must double our efforts address the cross-cutting binding constraints in energy, water, skills, broadband data, transport and logistics. If addressed decisively, these factors can serve as critical enablers.

The structural transformation towards a developmental, inclusive, and resilient economy requires a review of macro & micro economic policies and call for re-industrialisation processes that reduce human vulnerability and ecological degradation.

In light of the contribution it makes in the livelihoods of the people, we welcome and appreciate the extension of the SRoD Grant to 2024. We further call for the sustained provision of the Social Relief of Distress (SRoD) Grant at an increased rate of R624 until the introduction and implementation of the Universal Basic Income Grant (UBIG).

The multiple socio-economic crises that have been affecting our economy and the livelihoods of the people have been compounding the already precarious circumstances through the ever escalating cost of living. We must spare no effort in providing the much needed relief to the poorest of the poor, including support for community initiated response interventions.

The delays in the conclusion of the work of the Governance Task Team should concern all of us because they hold back NEDLAC from being the relevant, responsive, representative and fit-for-purpose institution it could become. In the current configuration, the people through their organisations of civil society continue to be relegated to be cases of welfare in the Development Chamber to the exclusion of our voices on economic issues in other Chambers. The exclusionary elitism must fall.

South Africa will be going for the seventh democratic national and provincial elections in 2024, taking us straight into 30 years of democracy. This will also mark 28 years of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This should challenge all of us to ponder and reflect over the journey we have traversed towards “progressive realisation of socio-economic right” as provided for in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the RSA. We believe that this should remain the pulling effect of our endeavours to position social dialogue as a process of finding solutions to our pressing and long standing challenges.

If not carefully contained, the low levels of voter turnout may grow to challenge the legitimacy of the elected government and later the State. NEDLAC must take interest in the agenda of consolidating our Democracy. Hence, we commend Deputy President Paul Mashatile for including NEDLAC Social Partners in the Dialogue about Coalition Governments.

As we conclude this reporting period, we also wish to bid our farewell and well wishes to the former Overall Convenor of Organised Labour, Cde Bheki Ntshalintshali, who concluded his service in April 2023. He served the workers and our country through NEDLAC with utmost dedication. He is certainly counted amongst those who hold institutional memory of NEDLAC that we should tap on from time to time. Sadly, it is also under the same period that we lost Cde Denis George in May 2023, the former General Secretary of FEDUSA. We once more wish to convey our most sincere condolences to his family and that his soul may find rest in eternal peace.

We bid farewell to Bheki Ntshalintshali from Labour and Dr Faried Adams from Government and welcome SAFTU as a new entrant to NEDLAC.

We wish to thank the Executive Director and the entire Secretariat of NEDLAC for their continued support and dedication over this period.

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OVERALL CONVENOR

NEDLAC COMMUNITY CONSTITUENCY