

Way Forward

There is a general acknowledgement that the political environment has changed since the formation of Nedlac. However, Nedlac remains an important vehicle in which to do things for which it was established. To do so now needs a broader commitment from all parties to ensure its continued success. In the current climate, with the huge challenges of delivery and achieving government's 2014 targets, the time is ripe for a review and some self reflection. One of Nedlac's strength is its ability, as an institution, to have created a culture of self-examination. A review does not make an institution such as Nedlac irrelevant. The social partners should be articulating where Nedlac should be situated so as to form part of and contribute towards broad transformation. This would provide clarity on the institution status. This process of evaluation should not only examine the structure and operation of the institution but also assess the role of the social partners and their own performance in promoting social dialogue. Each side should examine what is going wrong.

Such a process should also explore the following areas:

A review of the social dialogue institutions which have been replicated as this could stretch the capacity of stakeholders even further as it is often the same people involved in the multiple points of dialogue.

Throughout its short history, Nedlac has had to constantly demonstrate its relevance. It is clear therefore, that a more robust approach needs to be adopted to promote Nedlac's value and contribution to society. The Nedlac tradition of social dialogue makes for a distinct type of society. However, in the intellectual discourse this has not always been consistently articulated. Leveraging the value of dialogue is not always easy to achieve or articulate in the same way, as parliament is able to do in terms of what it achieves.

A more robust approach in promoting Nedlac's value requires the secretariat and the social partners to consistently popularize and promote Nedlac to the broader public and its own constituencies. For example, there are some government departments, which have not historically been represented in

Nedlac. The social partners need to demonstrate to them the value (that laws and/or policies tabled in Nedlac will have greater legitimacy than if by-passed) of their involvement and to breakdown misconceptions about Nedlac. Some Director-Generals have never been to Nedlac and the only thing they know about the institution is negative.

The social partners need to ensure that their own constituencies are educated about Nedlac, why it was formed, its vision and underlying philosophy. This is critical for new representatives who participate in Nedlac structures. The institution needs to continue refining processes so that they are streamlined and that constant delays do not occur, thereby frustrating processes. This would also require a review of the participation of a constituency in Nedlac processes.

Within the changing political landscape, the constitutions need to focus possibly on a smaller agenda and ensure there is delivery on those issues.

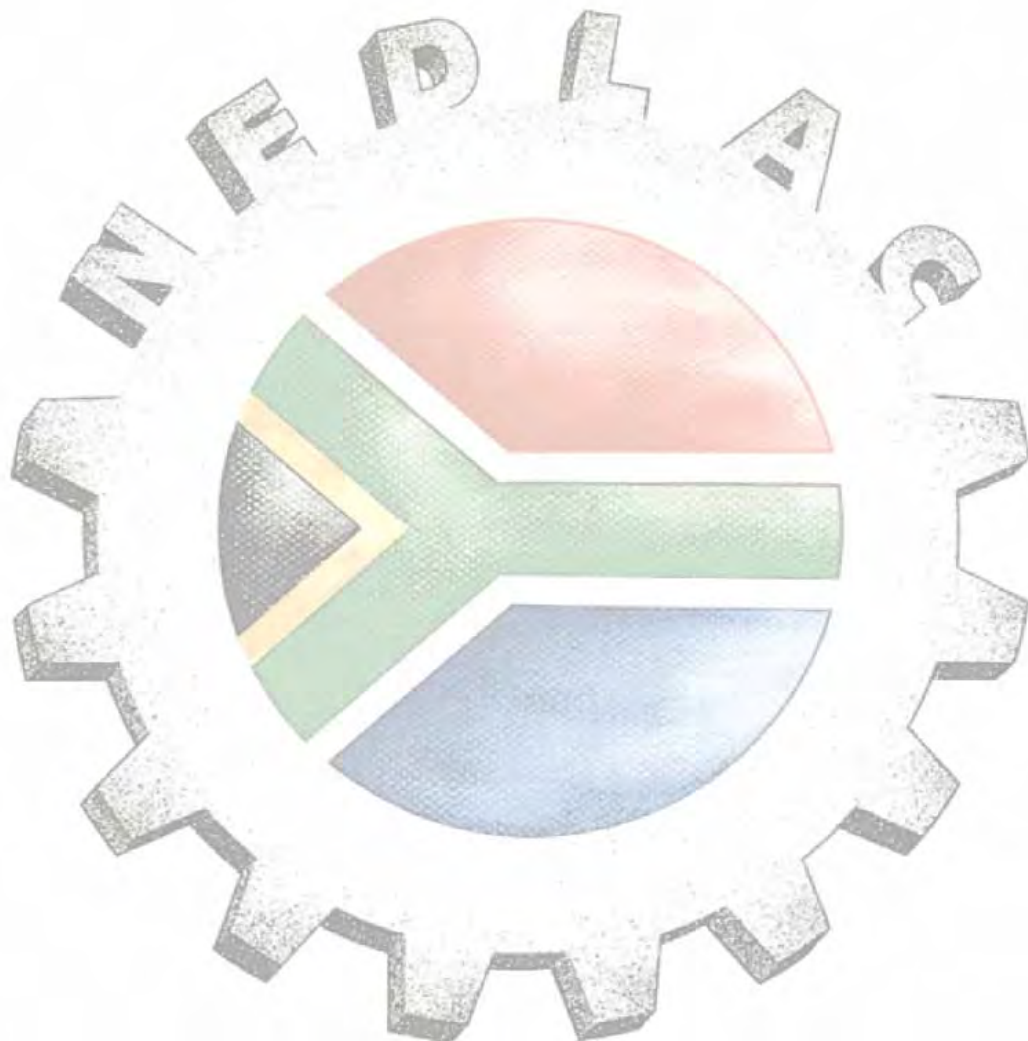
Institution capacity needs to be seriously addressed so that there is a well-resourced high-level secretariat as well as a consolidation of institutional memory. This might require a review of the existing recruitment and remuneration policies.

The secretariat needs to review its role and consider adopting a more proactive role in leading processes rather than waiting for the social partners to table issues. Often each party is waiting for the other to call the shots.

The presidential ten-year review stresses the role of partnership in service delivery. Nedlac needs to explore this as well as whether it can assist in processes at a local and provincial level where the real challenge for implementation exists.

The Minister of Labour has commissioned a review of Nedlac. The timelines for completing this exercise is the end of 2005 calendar year.





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