



# The year ahead for Nedlac

Nedlac's calendar for 2002 is set to be dominated by a range of summits relating to different types of issues. Although few of the dates have been finalised, summits already in the planning stages at Nedlac include:

- Information and Communication Technology Sector Summit (pencilled in for the last week of May)
- Summit on the Transformation of the Financial Sector
- Civil Society Summit
- World Summit on Sustainable Development (August to September)
- Nedlac Annual Summit (September).

Details of a possible People's Summit, which has been proposed by Cosatu, an Investment Summit, and the Growth Summit proposed by the ANC are still to be worked out, but all of these would involve the Nedlac constituencies.

Many of the summits have their origin in processes that have been ongoing for a number of years. The sector summits came out of an agreement at the Presidential Jobs Summit of 1998 that summits should be held in those sectors with high potential to create or lose jobs.

The Civil Society Summit has its roots in the Cotonou aid agreement signed between the African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries and the European Union in 2000, and the imperative to ensure that the voice of civil society is strengthened in the implementation of the agreement.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development is a United Nations event that takes place every ten years, the last having been in Rio de Janeiro. Since it is being held in Johannesburg this time, it is essential for the Nedlac parties to work together to ensure its success.

Apart from these scheduled summits, the calls for summits to address concerns around issues such as growth and investment reflect on the fact that constituencies are committed to finding ways of addressing the challenges facing the country.

Nedlac's executive director, Phillip Dexter, says 'a summit cannot solve anything. It can start a process, or it can end a process.' This was the case with the Presidential Jobs Summit, which in a way both represented the culmination of months of negotiations in the run-up to the summit, and the start of an implementation process that is still continuing. What should be ensured, is that the process of sustained qualitative engagement between the constituencies to meaningfully address issues and concerns and commit to solving problems, is emphasised.

Nedlac's management committee agreed during the first meeting of the year that a number of summits being proposed deal with similar issues. As a result, in order not to put undue pressure on the various constituencies, attempts would be



made to ensure some level of integration. The parties agreed to set out a clear framework of mechanisms to ensure the constituencies have a qualitative engagement and reach clear agreements on how to tackle the issues.

### **A social accord?**

There has been much speculation in the media about statements from various constituencies calling for an accord. No formal proposal has been tabled in Nedlac, but these calls are clearly made to suggest that the constituencies need to find a way to begin to reach agreement on key strategic issues, such as how to promote growth, investment, create jobs and improve the quality of lives of all South Africans. To this extent these calls and speculation is a welcome sign.

Experience gained from a study tour undertaken by Dexter together with representatives of business and labour to Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland organised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Millennium Labour Council is likely to filter into Nedlac's work programme.

Dexter says: 'The most important lesson from the trip is the confirmation of the comparative advantage that social dialogue has afforded those countries.'

### **Priorities in the chambers**

#### ***Labour Market Chamber***

- Implementation of the Labour Law Amendments: A coordinating team comprised of representatives from the CCMA, the Employment Conditions Commission and Nedlac has been established to oversee the process.
- Productivity: A paper has been completed by the NPI and Nedlac, which will form the basis of further discussions.

#### ***Development Chamber***

- Civil Society Summit
- World Summit on Sustainable Development (joint process with the Trade and Industry Chamber) There is a view that Nedlac should contribute to the volunteer programme, by investigating what kind of certification should be given for the skills and experience volunteers gain through working at the summit

#### ***Trade and Industry Chamber***

- Industrial strategy: Labour and business are interacting on government's document. A roundtable discussion, which will involve a broader interaction, is also planned.
- Sector Summits
- Daylight-Saving: A study has been done into the experience of daylight saving, and the parties have agreed to begin discussion on the merits of this concept for South Africa.

#### ***Public Finance and Monetary Policy Chamber***

- The transformation of the Financial Sector Summit
- The Budget: Finance Minister Trevor Manuel has been invited to address the Nedlac executive council on 22 February on the budget, having presented it to parliament on 20 February. The chamber will then begin to engage on the priorities for the 2003 budget.

#### ***Research***

- Socio-Economic Trends Bulletin: a quarterly bulletin compiling useful statistics on social and economic trends.
- Bargaining Councils: A report on the efficacy of the bargaining council structures is being compiled.