

Successful 8th Annual Summit follows GDS Theme

A successful 8th Annual NEDLAC Summit was held in Sandton on 27 September. The theme of the Summit was "Strengthening delivery: implementing the Growth and Development Summit Agreements." The Summit focused particularly on investment, jobs, black economic empowerment and delivery at the local level. It also provided an opportunity for the Nedlac constituencies to welcome the new Executive Director, Herbert Mkhize.

The Summit was chaired by Deputy President Jacob Zuma, who called on all the constituencies to work hard to ensure that all South Africans enjoy the economic benefits of freedom and democracy. He said that whilst the Growth and Development Summit was never meant to be a solution for all economic and development ailments, social dialogue and social partnership was something that could offer real solutions to the problems facing South Africans. He was also hopeful that the constituencies would begin to engage each other on critical issues that could not form part of the GDS agreement. "We are confident that Nedlac is the correct forum for these and many other complex policy issues that face us as a country", said Deputy President Zuma.

The Summit was attended by 300 senior delegates from Nedlac's four constituencies, as well as a number of guests from Parliamentary Committees, other statutory bodies, NGOs, Provincial and local governments, foreign embassies and other socio-economic councils.

Minister of Labour, Membathisi Mdladlana, commended Nedlac on the continued successes of the institution, particularly the successful hosting of the Growth and Development Summit. He assured the new Executive Director of Government's support for Nedlac and other institutions of social dialogue and social partnership in South Africa. He called on Nedlac to begin to identify areas of priority and not seek to do everything at the same time.

Speaking on behalf of the Community Constituency, Mpho Mojanaga, National Chairperson of the National Co-operatives Association of South Africa, NCASA, noted a few areas to which Nedlac should give priority. These included building a strong co-operative movement, transformation and diversification of the financial sector, making advances to ensure people with disabilities live without discrimination, and the challenge to defeat the scourge of HIV and AIDS.



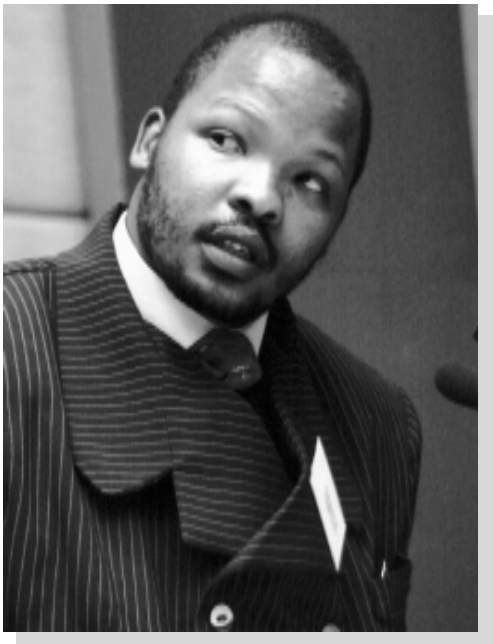
President of Cosatu, Willie Madisha is presented with an Ostrich egg gift by Herbert Mkhize



Cas Coovadia of Business receives his gift from Herbert Mkhize

Speaking on behalf of Business, Cas Coovadia took the opportunity to brief delegates on the pending unification of business, at both the multi-sectoral and over-arching levels. He said that a new, unified business organisation will replace the Black Business Council and Business South Africa, and this body will represent business in NEDLAC and will also be charged with the implementation of the Growth and Development Summit agreements. In relation to the Growth and Development Summit, Business said it was concerned that more than three months had elapsed since the Summit and very little implementation “and certainly nothing at the scale required” had taken place. “While no single constituency is solely responsible for the delay, business is not proud of this, and I am sure that the same holds true for our social partners. We will all be seriously neglecting the interests of the constituencies we represent, and indeed the people of this country, if we do not immediately take steps to ameliorate this situation.” said Mr Coovadia.

Labour’s speech placed the work of Nedlac into the broader economic context of rising unemployment, a fall in investment and the strength of the rand. President of Cosatu, Willie Madisha, concurred with other speakers that the most significant event of the past year had been the Growth and Development Summit. He said that the



Mpho Mojananga, National Chairperson of the National Co-operatives Association of South Africa, who spoke on behalf of community

constituencies ‘dare not fail in implementing these agreements’. Labour joined all the other constituencies in thanking the outgoing Executive Director, Phillip Dexter, who was on hand to take delegates through the review of the past year.

Newly appointed Executive Director, Herbert Mkhize, who only took up his post 12 days ago, thanked delegates for the warm welcome that he had received. He said that as “conductor of the Nedlac orchestra”, he was committed to helping the parties begin to produce some harmonious melodies. He outlined the implementation of the GDS agreements, the prioritisation of the Nedlac work programme and the co-ordination of sector summits as some of the challenges facing Nedlac in the coming year.

The Summit also included three commissions, where delegates were able to debate in more detail issues related to the Summit theme. The topics were:

- “Addressing the Investment Challenge: investment instruments and mechanisms”, together with ‘Jobs: More jobs, better jobs, decent work for all’
- Broadening Black Economic Empowerment - spreading the benefits of BEE, advancing equity, skills development and creating economic opportunities for all.
- Local Action and Implementation; developing strategies and programmes to promote social dialogue at local levels.



Vic van Vuuren (business) left, Les Kettleidas (government) left centre, Ebrahim Patel (labour) right centre, Raymond Parsons (business) at the Nedlac Summit.