



Nedlac parties urged to implement skills strategy

The Minister of Labour, Membathisi Mdadlana, has urged labour, business and community to ensure that the sector education and training authorities (Setas) which have been established in various industries, are working. Speaking at the Nedlac Executive Council meeting in August, the Minister said. "If Setas are setting targets too low or are trapped in processes which seem to deliver outputs too slowly, it is the job of the employers and the unions to correct these."

The Minister was concerned that companies were not claiming the grants to which they were entitled for training. He reported that there was about R1 billion in the National Skills Fund, which would be replenished each year, and it was up to labour and business to ensure that the money was spent. He urged labour to demand training for its representatives with the same vigour that it demanded other conditions of employment.

He explained that the money was disbursed through the Department of Labour's provincial offices, Setas, working in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry and

also through funding scarce skills bursaries.

The learnership programme is an important aspect of the skills development strategy. Learnerships are aimed at providing meaningful work experience to those who struggle to enter the labour market. Learnerships could also offer an opportunity for people trapped in lower skills jobs to address problems of skills development. For employers, learnerships could increase the pool of available skills at a lower cost than formal training. About 150 learnership programmes have been registered, or are about to be registered.

The Minister further urged the Nedlac constituencies to encourage their members to be whistle-blowers on crime. "Of course, we have all heard of the disastrous instance of corruption in one of the Setas." He said that criminal proceedings were under way against those implicated and similar action would be taken against anyone else who "shames SA and its vision and purpose."



Phillip Dexter presents Nedlac's Annual Report to the Minister of Labour, Membathisi Mdadlana

He proposed that the Nedlac Management Committee should develop a monitoring mechanism to monitor the collective commitment of all social partners to the implementation of the strategy, and that there should be periodic reports at Executive Council meetings on the progress made.

The constituencies, particularly Labour, shared the Minister's concerns about how well the Setas were ensuring implementation. Business raised concerns about the funding model for the strategy, and proposed that the National Skills Authority, on whose board all the Nedlac constituencies are represented, investigate how the process could be improved. The Community constituency raised problems of access to the opportunities, especially by people from target groups and the rural areas.