

Introduction – Executive Director



Phillip Dexter,
Executive Director

The year 2002/2003 has been an important one for Nedlac. Having repositioned the institution, from one whose obituary had already been written, to now occupying a central place in our society, the constituencies in Nedlac have had their work cut out for them.

The work program of the institution has continued to lengthen. This has inevitably meant a squeeze on the resources of the institution. While all would welcome the relevance of Nedlac, it is only fair to point out that such a trend is simply not sustainable in the long term. Constituencies must discuss the resourcing of Nedlac, its staff recruitment and retention strategy and crucially, how to build partnerships with other institutions to give the institution and the secretariat in particular, the capacity it requires.

Social dialogue has continued to develop in our country. We should all welcome this. Building a stakeholder society, one in which all feel they are included, is a key challenge for our young and vibrant democracy. During this year, Nedlac has tackled the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the preparations for the post-Doha process in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Constituencies have engaged on the policy to build co-operatives, on Black Economic Empowerment and on sector strategies.

Highlights of the year include the Information and Communication Technologies sector summit, the Financial Sector Summit and the preparations for the Growth and Development Summit (GDS). In each of these instances, the value of social dialogue and of an institution that is a world-class model, to paraphrase the Director-General of the International Labour Organisation in his address to Nedlac, is self-evident. Our country will not meet the challenges it faces through quick-fixes, through claiming easy victories, but through hard work. Nedlac is central to ensuring that all constituencies are included in this effort.

It has also become increasingly clear that Nedlac's role in developing social capital is crucial. Whether in relation to the challenge of HIV/AIDS, social security or to promoting social dialogue at a local level, Nedlac has continued to be a forum for crucial interactions between the key sectors of our society. In this regard, it has to be said, the outstanding issue of the draft agreement on a National Prevention and Treatment Plan for HIV and AIDS stands out as an uncompleted task. The HIV/AIDS epidemic, along with violent crime, poverty and unemployment, is a key challenge all South Africans face. To leave it to one constituency would be foolish. This agreement is a task that Nedlac must complete.

The year ahead for Nedlac is an exciting one. The GDS, sector strategies and other agreements need to be completed and their implementation monitored. Proudly South African has established itself as a key brand

and the promotion of the campaign is an ongoing task. In all these challenges what remains fundamental is that constituencies have progressed to the point where their relationship is no longer simply one of negotiating to get concessions from one another, but is about understanding what each may contribute to the growth and development of our country.

The challenges are daunting. Unemployment is still too high, investment not high enough. Inequality and poverty in our country are at obscene levels. The challenge for the Nedlac constituencies is to consider how these may be overcome. Social dialogue remains a key instrument for achieving these goals.

The graph below indicates the number of meetings that Nedlac held in the year under review. As can be seen from the graph, the Trade and Industry Chamber was again the busiest chamber. The total number of meetings was 210, up from 192 in the last reporting period. The Public Finance and Monetary Policy Chamber was significantly more active in this period, mainly as a result of the Transformation of the Financial Sector process, which included an international workshop and a summit.

NUMBER OF MEETINGS: MARCH 2002 - APRIL 2003

