

Keynote address by the Deputy Minister in the Presidency,

Mr Buti Manamela,

to the South African Institute of International Affairs

Young Leaders Conference 2016,

University of Witwatersrand, Gauteng

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Representative from ABSA

Distinguished guests

Young leaders

It gives me great pleasure to be with you here this morning and I would like to thank the South African Institute of International Affairs for inviting me to deliver the keynote address at this Young Leaders Conference 2016.

South Africa, in an adolescent metaphor, represents a coming of age with twenty one years of democracy.

If South Africa was a young person today, he or she would have been given the keys to freedom as a rite of passage. He or she would be old enough to vote, old enough to buy booze, old enough to be tried as an adult and old enough to enter into legal agreements.

And while we celebrate twenty two years of freedom, we also commemorate and celebrate epoch events and milestones that contributed to our freedom. One of these events is the 40th anniversary of the Youth Uprising in Soweto on June 16, 1976.

On June 16, we commemorated this historic day with the Deputy President laying a wreath at the Hector Pieterse memorial. The main event took place at the Orlando Stadium with President Zuma as the main speaker. It was a dignified programme exhorting the nation to commemorate the brave students and youth who sacrificed so much for us to have our freedom and democracy today.

It was a commemoration that afforded us the opportunity to give respect to the young heroes and heroines and recognise their place in our history, yesterday, today and forevermore.

I encourage you to take the opportunity to reflect on the 40th anniversary of the Youth Uprising and its ramifications for your conference theme: “Connecting the past to the present: Young South Africans shaping a sustainable future”.

Government has developed the National Youth Policy 2020 as its seminal platform to drive its youth development response. In developing this policy we extensively consulted with young people. This was important to us because we wanted young people to speak and to own their youth policy.

Nothing for us without us. The NYP 2020 was developed with the firm belief that young men and women have a critical role to play in their own development. Their views matter and their voices must be heard.

As we consulted young people, they overwhelmingly told us that they want a hand up and not a hand out.

They told us that they do not want to be passive recipients of government interventions. But rather, they are ready to be active partners in youth development. They are not looking for special favours from government. But instead, they want government to create that enabling environment which creates opportunity for them to grab and take hold off as they steer themselves down the development trajectory.

Therefore the outcome of the NYP 2020 is “to produce empowered young people who are able to realise their full potential and understand their roles and responsibilities in making a meaningful contribution to the development of a non-racial, equal, democratic and prosperous South Africa.”

When we consulted the nation in developing the National Development Plan 2030, our citizens in no uncertain terms told us that they envision a South Africa where everyone feels free yet bounded to others. They envision a South Africa where everyone embraces their full potential.

They envision a country where opportunity is determined not by birth, but by ability, education and hard work. And that they realise that such a society will require transformation of the economy and focused efforts to build the countries capabilities.

Through the NDP 2030 and the NYP 2020 – our citizens, both young and old, called for developing people’s capabilities in the quest for freedom. They saw themselves as active partners in South Africa’s development and that the process of empowerment would be incomplete without their active role.

As you deliberate on your important conference themes, please keep these questions in mind, as anchored in the NYP2020 and the NDP 2030: “How are people involved? What role do they play? How do we encourage an active citizenry?”

Allow me to make some input on your conference themes related to the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2063.

As we gather at this conference shaped around a sustainable future, I am reminded of Robert Redford in his film, *The Spy Game*, as he holds a conversation with his assistant Gladys. He rhetorically asks Gladys: “When did Noah build the Ark?” and then responds, “before the rain, Gladys, before the rain.”

My question to you is: “Who will build the Ark today?”

The green economy and more particularly, participation in the green economy are an important global matter that is gaining traction amongst developed and developing countries. At least 9 of the 17 recently adopted United Nations Sustainable Development Goals relate directly to the green economy and the environment.

In 2006, more than 2.3 million people worldwide were working in the renewable energy sector. The recycling industry in Brazil, China and the USA alone employs at least 12 million people.

Processing recyclable materials sustains 10 times more jobs than landfill or incineration (on a per tonne basis). Ecotourism has a 20 per cent annual growth rate, about six times the rate for the rest of the sector. Emerging economies' share of global investment in renewables rose from 29 per cent in 2007 to 40 per cent in 2008 – primarily in Brazil, China and India. - Only 25 per cent of the world's waste is recovered or recycled. The world market for waste is worth around \$410 billion a year.

There is a growing demand globally for renewable energy solutions, technologies and products. This demand is the direct result of the challenges relating to addressing climate change, promoting sustainability and improving environmental quality.

As a result, there is a rise in opportunities for environmental entrepreneurs or “ecopreneurs”. Note that I said “ecopreneurs” and not “tenderpreneurs”. Who will step up to be the ecopreneurs of South Africa?

The youth of our continent, constituting 65% of the population, are a catalytic force for the attainment of the African Union's Agenda 2063. Your role and your actions will be instrumental in placing young people at the centre of the continuous development of the African development agenda. Whilst the rest of the world is aging, a youthful Africa has to take advantage of the potential demographic dividend that is brought about by this youth bulge.

As we meet here today, there are still countries that are yet to ratify, or even to sign, the African Youth Charter and therefore creating doubt about their commitment to youth development and empowerment.

As young activists and global shapers, we must insist that we cannot affirm a country's commitment to the goals set in Agenda 2063 when they have not appended their signature on the African Youth Charter.

The future of the continent, which in Agenda 2063, begins with the implementation of the basic tenets of the African Youth Charter.

This year, 2016, marks the 10th Anniversary since the African Youth Charter was adopted in July 2006 in Banjul by Heads of State and Government. As young activists, you are well placed to begin to lobby for the review of the implementation of the key articles of the African Youth Charter.

This Young Leaders Conference is dealing with serious themes related to our current and future humanity. From the Sustainable Development Goals to the COP21 Paris Agreement to

the Agenda 63 and to the National Development Plan 2030, you will find complex and competing priorities co-existing alongside each other.

Young people must have a voice in these complex and competing priorities. What is that voice? Is it more of the same tired incrementalism that has characterised the solutions of the older generation?

Or is it a radical change that addresses the roots of complex problems. It is my hope that a youth voice will permeate your research and discussions. It is my hope that a youth vibrancy will characterise your resolutions and outcomes.

Mark Davis writes in his paper Who Will Build the Ark: "I appeal to the paradox that the single most important cause of global warming—the urbanisation of humanity—is also potentially the principal solution to the problem of human survival in the later twenty-first century.

Left to the dismal politics of the present, of course, cities of poverty will almost certainly become the coffins of hope; but all the more reason that we must start thinking like Noah. Since most of history's giant trees have already been cut down, a new Ark will have to be constructed out of the materials that a desperate humanity finds at hand in insurgent communities, pirate technologies, bootlegged media, rebel science and forgotten utopias."

I wish you well in your deliberations.

I look forward to meeting you again at the Union Buildings on Thursday and hearing your resolutions.

Thank you.

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