

WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, MR SIFISO MTSWENI AT THE 4TH BRICS YOUTH SUMMIT, ZEBULA GUEST LODGE, BELA BELA, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA 16 JULY 2018

Minister in the Presidency responsible for the Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma,
Deputy Executive Board Chairperson, Ms Bavelile Hlongwa,
Members of the NYDA Board
National Youth Development Agency CEO, Mr Wassim Carrim,
The BRICS Youth Heads of Delegation
All Esteemed delegates
Distinguished guests
Members of the Media,

Thobela.

“Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies”. - Kofi Annan

Let me take this opportunity to welcome you to our beautiful country. South Africa for the duration of this summit is your home away from home. I urge everyone to enjoy our hospitality, the sights, our food and our culture as an expression of our friendship and solidarity with our BRICS partners and the world. We are forever indebted to all of you having travelled from your respective countries.

In our welcome note, I had on behalf the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) summed up our desire to exchange critical views on the future of our cooperation and partnership, but most importantly expressed the fortitude to ensure that at the centre of this working together, young people remain key beneficiaries.

It is in that context that we convene under the theme “Radical Economic Transformation: Making the New Development Bank Work for the Youth”. The 4th BRICS Youth Summit presents us with an opportunity to look beyond this gathering for long-lasting solutions for challenges that confront our nations, particularly young people. Hasten to say, this summit will also serve as a platform to look at how far we have traversed in implementing resolutions taken in the previous

summits, including areas of cooperation in line with our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on youth affairs signed on 06 July 2015 in Kazan, Russia.

We meet after South Africa celebrated Youth Month. This year marked 42 years since the Soweto Students' Uprising of 1976. The uprising heralded a new era in the struggle for freedom and democracy. Young people had rallied behind the clarion call for Freedom Now! Education Later. It is that determination and commitment that brought apartheid rule to its knees. At the same breath, our struggle has changed to translate into the adage "political freedom without economic freedom is futile". Thus the call by our youth for Economic Freedom in Our Lifetime.

We are delighted that this is an overarching phenomenon, looking at the challenges facing youth within the BRICS countries. All our countries are amongst the most unequal societies. Our levels of unemployed youth possess a great danger to our sovereignty and democracy. Moreover, the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution poses a threat on the future of work and demands a forwarding looking approach. We, the future of our respective countries have a potential to turn threats into opportunities for our world as argued in the opening words by Kofi Annan.

Youth development is at the centre of our country's future and forms the core of its development agenda. Thus, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 correctly asserts that, "no development of any society can happen without its youth". The NDP (2030) singles out young people as key to the development of the country. It highlights that South Africa's youthful population presents an opportunity to boost economic growth, increase employment and reduce poverty.

Acknowledging the role that youth can play in sustainable development and economic growth, government has moved considerably and has implemented policies, regulations and programmes. In addition to this, the formation of the NYDA as a primary institution responsible for youth development demonstrates government commitment. The adoption of the National Youth Policy (2020) is also a notable step towards socio-economic empowerment of young people.

The upcoming three days will see be a festival of ideas through panel discussion and expert opinions. It is important however to mention that the South African delegates understands that we participate in BRICS to advance our own interests, the interests of Africa and the

global South. We share a common vision with other members of BRICS. It is a vision, which we will continue to pursue through economic cooperation, sharing of technical expertise, knowledge and experiences.

Nevertheless, to us it is important leave this summit with a body that will oversee the implementation of our resolution and any other youth-related resolve taken by the main summit of heads of states. We want our counterparts to take from our war cry as South African youth, "nothing about us without. I will later today in my presentation propose a structure that we think might advance that which we want to achieve.

We shall in honour of the Father of our Nation, Tata Nelson Mandela take part in the International Nelson Mandela Day celebration being of service to others. The National Youth Service Programme of the NYDA will announce activities for that day. Our government also declared this year as the centenary year of Mama Albertina Sisulu, and in her honor own, this summit will expatiate on gender struggles across the BRICS countries. Like in the words of Tata Mandela "Freedom cannot be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression."

The overarching message that we must take to Youth Ministers Meeting sitting ahead of the 10th BRICS Summit, is the prioritisation of youth development across all five countries because young people are a positive conduit of progress.

Thank you.