



public works
& infrastructure
Department:
Public Works and Infrastructure
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**ADDRESS BY THE ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL, MR IMTIAZ
FAZEL ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST PHYSICAL ORDINARY
SITTING AND DINNER OF THE 6TH TERM ENGINEERING COUNCIL
OF SOUTH AFRICA (ECOSA)**

25 November 2021

PROTOCOL

Programme Director

ECOSA President, Mr Lawrence Lebea

Vice President, Ms Refilwe Buthelezi

Council Members

Senior Managers of ECOSA and the DPWI

Esteemed Guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I wish to convey sincere apologies for both the Minister and her Deputy for not being with us this evening due to pressing commitments. As Members of Parliament both of them were obligated to attend a compulsory Parliamentary session today. The Ministry has therefore given us their blessing to represent the Department.

It has been one full year since the 6th term Council came into being and it has not been an uneventful year. The Council has had to deal with some baggage from the 5th term Council, but it has done so in a professional way that gives confidence that it is well equipped to deal with any potential potholes in the future.

Yet, the Council has had to hit the ground running. The Council came in at a time when the annual corporate plans were at a critical stage of development. The new members in particular have had to learn very quickly of what is required of this auspicious organisation.

This dinner follows the very first physical sitting of the Council earlier today. This apparently can be attributed to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has ravaged our country and caused much devastation to the lives of South Africans, not to mention the economy. It has drastically affected the way we do business and forced us to be creative in the manner in which we execute our functions in furtherance of our mandates.

We are now seeing a decline in the numbers of those infected by the virus, although there is talk of a 4th wave that is possibly coming. The current decline in the numbers does not necessarily mean we can now return to business as usual. The danger is still very much alive and present and therefore we must remain vigilant and observe all the safety protocols that are set by Government. I suppose in many instances, hybrid models of convening meetings will be observed, whereby a number of the attendees will be required to be physically present at a venue, whilst others join

virtually. For a huge Council such as ECSA, I suppose that will be serious consideration until we have beaten the virus and eradicated all the infections. Hence, it is important to support the drive to vaccinate and the benefits have been proven to far outweigh the negatives.

Programme Director

In his address to a Joint sitting of Parliament in October 2020, His Excellency, the President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, tabled for the first time the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP). In that address he made a pointed remark in that “infrastructure has immense potential for stimulating investment and growth, to develop other economic sectors and create sustainable employment, both directly and indirectly”. The ERRP, is borne out of the stark realisation that “for the past decade, the South African economy has experienced stagnation, which has put a strain in the effort to tackle the historical structural inequalities, unemployment and poverty.”

In an effort to address the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and set the country on a path of economic recovery, the Plan outlines key priorities to be addressed, chief among which is “aggressive infrastructure investment”. The Plan also explicitly states that to achieve success in implementation, it will be key to among others, ensure a capable State and focus on skills development.

Lately the Department and the Council for the Built Environment have been engaging the Department of High Education with a view to not only improve the skills pipeline, but also develop targets for contributing to the ERRP, as well as the Construction Industry Recovery Plan (CIRP) in respect of skills development in the built environment. The CBE has outlined its contribution to the ERRP supported by inputs from all the professional councils. We are expected to report ERRP milestones on a monthly basis, which are first submitted to the Minister for approval to submit to the Cabinet Cluster for Economic Sectors Investment Employment and Infrastructure Development (ESIEID). That body ultimately makes decisions on ERRP that deserve further support from Government, including financial support from the Presidential Economic Stimulus package. We have not received such support as yet and therefore your contribution may assist to reach that goal of noticeability, mainly due to the economic benefits that our sector promises to produce through the contribution to the ERRP.

You will recall that the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) was approved and gazetted in May 2020. These plans go hand in hand and complement one another. Part of the IIP involves using the Sustainable Infrastructure Development System (SIDS) methodology to assess key infrastructure projects to ensure that they are bankable. A total of 50 such projects and another 12 special projects were identified and gazetted as Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) in July 2020. The DPWI's Infrastructure South Africa (ISA) has been tasked with the work to prepare these projects for implementation and to unblock challenges in other critical infrastructure projects. The sectors that are affected comprise water, energy, transport,

human settlements and telecommunications sector, with a focus on digital technology in keeping with the move towards the 4th Industrial Revolution.

The IIP comes on the back of a recognition that there has been a massive underspending in infrastructure by all spheres of Government and State-owned Entities. Underspending can have an adverse impact on job creation. For example, if around 5 percent of the annual infrastructure allocations are not expended, about 37 000 jobs are lost annually. Also, the construction Industry has been the most severely impacted by the downgrades in the economy and Covid-19, yet this is one sector that has a major potential to serve as a catalyst for positive gross domestic production (GDP) contribution, sustained economic development and job creation.

In her Budget Vote Speech on 25 May 2021, the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Ms Patricia de Lille, indicated how 84 projects and programmes had been on hold, have been identified, and would be sent back to their project owners to advise them to resubmit their infrastructure projects, but using the SIDS methodology. This uncovering of the stagnant projects is a result of Government's vision of taking a decision to have a single-view of the country's infrastructure projects pipeline, with a view to improving performance and unlocking bottlenecks to effective implementation. It is for this reason that ISA was established and is located within the Department to undertake this crucial work of driving the implementation of Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIPs), as well as advancing the IIP.

Council President

In ensuring that infrastructure projects become bankable, it is very clear that built environment professionals, in particular engineers, will have to play a critical role in this regard. It will be crucial to have people that share the same vision as Government, who will come on board to share ideas and assist the country to set it on a path to economic recovery. As we drive towards the 4th Industrial revolution we need to be alive to the requirement to ensure that infrastructure projects create as many jobs as possible. This does not only talk to infrastructure delivery and job creation, but it also talks to skills development in order to have a wider population of people equipped with the right skills that are required for economic development.

The DPWI has made a significant contribution to bolstering the pipeline in order to ensure that learners are supported through their studies all the way through to professional registration. Year on year we are having young people registered as professionals due to interventions such as the Department's Young Professionals Programme. The Programme currently has forty three (43) Engineering Candidates (Civil, Electrical and Mechanical) mentored towards professional registration. 18% of these are females; 96, 56% Africans, 1, 29% Coloureds and Whites, 0, 86 Indians. Seventeen (17) Engineering Interns are set to join the department in the coming year. Sixteen (16) Engineering bursary holders will join the department to start with the Internship Programme in 2022. Females remain underrepresented in Engineering, hence programmes such as the School Programme, where learners are attracted into the profession, remain critical for the department. 18 Engineering professionals obtained professional registration through their involvement in the Young

Professionals Programme. Of this number, 50% are females; 99, 9% Africans and 0.1% Indians.

The department currently manages other programmes aimed at capacitation and skills development: **Skills Attraction Programmes** (i.e. Schools Programme, Bursary Scheme and Bursary Care, Job Shadowing, Vacation Work); **Intermediate Phase Programmes** (i.e. Technical Internship, Artisan Development, Management Trainee, Young Professionals Programme, Candidacy Programme (for permanent employees) : and **Skills Retention Strategies** (i.e. In-House Design Teams, OSD Remuneration, Mentorship).

The aim of the Department's Skills Pipeline Strategy is to ensure the creation of a pool of professionals that will enable the Department and the public works sector at large to deliver on the Infrastructure Cycle, comprising of Planning, Acquisition, Operation & Maintenance and Disposal. This forms part of the initiatives to develop a capable State. To this effect there is a Public Works Sector Capacity Building Forum, a formal structure led by the Department.

To celebrate the great contribution by our Engineering Candidates, we plan to host an Engineering Design Expo from the 2nd to the 03rd of December 2021 in Pretoria.

The Design Expo will showcase commissioned projects and approved designs that are ready for construction, executed by Candidates and Interns, under professional supervision.

Engineers from the Department, Provincial Departments and Private Sector will share their valuable input to further refine the skills and competencies of upcoming professionals

Esteemed guests

There have been some remarkable developments by ECSA, which deserve a mention. During this financial year Council has been able to gazette the Identification of Engineering Work (IDoEW). This, as very well known by yourselves, is prescribed in the Engineering Professions Act, which calls for the identification of the types of engineering works that are to be performed by suitably qualified engineering professionals in the various categories.

One has noted the decline in the numbers in the engineering professions of late, which partly is a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also a result of the dynamics of practicing in the profession. It is understandable that a registered professional engineer would not be encouraged to maintain their registration status if they have to compete with persons who are not registered. It does not make economical sense to keep one's registration, especially when one is guaranteed a pipeline of jobs, mainly acquired on reputation, where producing proof of registration is even no longer a requirement.

The gazetting of the IDoEW by ECSA and the CBE is major breakthrough, which will see that we achieve the progressive realisation of the objective of ensuring public safety and properly regulating the engineering sector. As the DPWI we are ready to provide further support in the unfolding consultation processes.

Ladies and gentlemen

One would also like to applaud the ECSA on the recent achievement in respect of the trip to Mauritius between 06 and 13 November 2021 to conduct an Accreditation of the University of Mauritius' engineering faculties. In the spirit of South-South Cooperation and cooperation amongst SADC countries this is a crucial development that might see the island country joining the International Engineering Alliance and being part of the Washington Accords. It is very key that professionals enjoy that latitude to practice their chosen profession in countries other than their country of birth, but most importantly in countries that we share close economic and political cooperation ties with. It also provides the assurance that professionals who practice in South Africa possess the appropriate qualifications beyond a shadow of a doubt. We are therefore encouraged by this piece of news and we look forward to further developments in this regard.

As I conclude I would like us to recall that the country still faces huge service delivery challenges. We're confronted with a huge infrastructure challenge, especially when it comes to water, wastewater treatment and sanitation. These challenges affect millions of people, particularly in urban areas who still live in informal settlements without running water, while

residing in spaces that often are less than one metre apart, thereby posing a challenge around providing bulk services in such settlements. In this case, the role of the Engineer is vital. Creative solutions are needed to ensure sustainable human settlements. We are at the stage where we have started to talk about smart cities, but that is no use when millions are left behind in conditions of squalor. We therefore need the Council's intervention in bringing forth those ideas that will assist in better service delivery.

From governance, strategy and planning perspectives, the department is available to support the Council to achieve its objectives and to intervene when required to do in line with legislative prescripts. We are pleased at the participation levels by ECSA at oversight sessions convened by the Deputy Minister on a quarterly basis. This is contributing immensely on alignment of our plans and strategies on built environment and transformation imperatives. We call on ECSA to remain involved as we will be convening further coordinated planning sessions, where the focus will be on a Transformed Built Environment and Integrated Coordination and Planning.

As a department, we want wish the Council well and hope the coming years will able to take Engineering profession to even greater heights.

I thank you