



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

**YOUTH MACHINERY MEETING WITH THE
DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES**

**NYDA BOARD STRATEGY ALIGNED WITH YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT PLAN**

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**SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE
OCCASION OF THE YOUTH MACHINERY MEETING | NYDA BOARD STRATEGY
& YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PLAN ALIGNMENT**

Programme Director,
Colleagues from the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities,
Representatives from national and provincial departments, municipalities, state
entities, civil society partners, and members of the National Youth Machinery.

On behalf of the 5th Board of Directors of the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), I would like to express our appreciation for the continued commitment of all institutions represented here today.

The National Youth Machinery remains one of the most important coordinating platforms for youth development in South Africa. It ensures that youth priorities are not treated as isolated programmes, but as a cross-cutting national agenda implemented across all spheres of government and across society.

Today's discussion is particularly important because it allows us to connect strategy with implementation. We have heard presentations on the Youth Employment Strategy and the Youth Employment Plan. My role this morning is to reflect on how the NYDA Board Strategy aligns with and strengthens this national effort.

Colleagues, we meet at a time of profound uncertainty in the global system. Across the world, geopolitical tensions, economic instability, climate shocks, technological disruption, and shifting trade relations are reshaping national economies and labour markets.

For young people, these global realities translate directly into uncertain employment prospects, disrupted education pathways, and increasing vulnerability to economic exclusion.

At the same time, South Africa faces its own structural challenges. Recent labour force data continues to highlight the scale of the youth unemployment crisis, with young people remaining disproportionately affected by unemployment, poverty, and inequality.

Economic growth alone will not resolve youth unemployment. Even where growth occurs, the labour market has not absorbed young people at the scale required.



This is why the Youth Employment Implementation Plan was developed - a focused, jobs-first approach aimed at unlocking 1.8 million earning opportunities for young people by 2030.

This work takes place during a particularly symbolic year for South Africa. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the 1976 youth uprisings, when young people stood courageously at the forefront of the struggle for justice and dignity.

Fifty years later, the question before us is not only how we honour that legacy, but how we ensure that the freedoms fought for translate into real economic opportunity for this generation of young people.

Programme Director, the 5th NYDA Board has developed its strategy to position the Agency as both a programme implementer and a catalyst for youth economic participation and policy coordination.

The strategy is anchored around four pillars:

First: Youth Empowerment – improving service turnaround times, expanding access for rural and township youth, strengthening mentorship and aftercare, and revitalising the National Youth Service as a pathway to skills and employment.

Second: Economic Transformation – supporting sectors such as the digital economy, agriculture, the ocean economy and emerging industries, while expanding innovative funding models including catalytic finance and enterprise support.

Third: Equity and Inclusion – addressing barriers facing marginalised youth, including young women, youth with disabilities, rural youth and LGBTQIA+ youth.

Fourth: Governance and Accountability – strengthening oversight, improving measurable outcomes, and ensuring transparent and accountable implementation.

The framework presented before us identifies five critical levers to reduce youth unemployment, and the NYDA strategy is aligned with them.

Lever 1: Inclusive Hiring – ensuring that new entry-level jobs created in the economy are accessible to young people through employer partnerships and employment platforms.

Lever 2: Priority Sectors – supporting sectors capable of generating employment at scale such as agriculture, tourism, digital services and green economy opportunities.

Lever 3: Demand-Led Skills – aligning skills development programmes with labour market demand so that training leads to employment outcomes.

Lever 4: Sustainable Self-Employment – enabling youth entrepreneurship through finance, incubation and business development support.



Lever 5: Public Employment Programmes – strengthening programmes that provide work experience and pathways into longer-term employment.

None of these interventions can succeed in isolation. And this is why the National Youth Machinery matters. Addressing youth unemployment requires coordination across national, provincial and local government, alongside the private sector and civil society.

Municipalities play a particularly important role, as they are closest to communities and young people.

The National Youth Machinery therefore serves as the connective tissue that ensures youth development is integrated across planning, budgeting and implementation throughout the state.

Colleagues, as we reflect on the 50th anniversary of the youth of 1976, we are reminded that young people have always been central to shaping South Africa's future.

Our responsibility is to ensure that today's generation inherits a country defined not by exclusion and unemployment, but by opportunity, participation and shared prosperity.

The NYDA Board remains committed to working with all partners to advance this shared mission.

Thank you.