



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

OPENING REMARKS, PARLIAMENT

12 AUGUST 2026

**SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE
CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY
APPEARANCE – *Opening Remarks* | ±5 minutes**

12 August 2026

*Honourable Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour,
Honourable Members of the Committee,
Representatives of the National Planning Commission,
The Financial and Fiscal Commission,
The Department of Employment and Labour,
Our social partners and youth delegates,
Distinguished guests,*

Good morning.

Before I begin, allow me to acknowledge that we gather during Women's Month, a month in which South Africa honours the extraordinary courage, sacrifice and leadership of women who shaped the course of our democracy.

This year marks seventy years since the historic Women's March of 1956, when more than 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings in defence of justice, dignity and equality. Their courage reminds us that lasting change has never come from silence, but from organised action and principled leadership.

As we commemorate this milestone, we also recognise that the pursuit of economic justice remains unfinished. For many young women in South Africa, access to employment, entrepreneurship, productive assets and economic opportunity continues to be shaped by persistent inequality. It is therefore fitting that today's sitting is centred on creating an economy that is more inclusive of young people, and particularly young women.

Chairperson,

Allow me to begin by briefly clarifying the role of the National Youth Development Agency.

There is often a misconception that the NYDA exists primarily to employ young people. Our mandate, as entrusted to us by Parliament, is different, but no less significant.



The National Youth Development Agency exists to initiate, design, coordinate, monitor and evaluate youth development programmes; to lobby organs of state, the private sector and civil society around national youth development priorities; to contribute to the implementation of the National Youth Policy and the Integrated Youth Development Strategy; and to promote a coherent national approach to youth development.

Simply put, the Agency exists to build pathways into economic participation.

Our responsibility is to convene the right partners, advocate for policy reform, strengthen coordination across institutions, connect young people to opportunities, support entrepreneurship, improve employability, and ensure that youth development remains a national priority across government and society. The Agency's amended legislative mandate further strengthens this responsibility by specifically requiring the NYDA to manage interventions that assist young people to find employment, provide career guidance, design youth employment programmes, maintain databases of unemployed youth and employment opportunities, and provide youth advisory services, skills development and entrepreneurial support.

Chairperson,

This mandate is informed by the lived reality confronting millions of young South Africans.

For many young people, unemployment does not begin when they fail to secure a job. It begins long before they submit an application.

It begins when entry-level positions require previous experience that they have never been afforded the opportunity to obtain. It begins when a driver's licence or access to reliable transport becomes the difference between opportunity and exclusion. It begins when opportunities are concentrated far from rural communities and townships, making the cost of seeking work prohibitively expensive. It begins when information about available opportunities fails to reach those who need it most. It begins when capable young people struggle to compile a competitive curriculum vitae, correctly complete a Z83 application, prepare for an interview, or navigate increasingly digital recruitment systems.

These may appear to be isolated administrative obstacles, but together they form structural barriers that continue to prevent young people from participating meaningfully in the economy.

These challenges are compounded by broader systemic realities, including persistently high youth unemployment, weak school-to-work transitions, fragmented programme delivery, unequal access to opportunities for rural youth and persons with disabilities, and labour market conditions that continue to leave far too many young South Africans behind.



Chairperson,

It is precisely these barriers that have informed the Agency's programme design.

Through our Youth Advisory Services and Job Preparedness Programme, the Agency assists young people to prepare professional CVs, complete Z83 application forms correctly, prepare for interviews, receive career guidance and access information about available opportunities. Through our Jobs Programme, partnerships with employers and employment initiatives, we seek to connect young people to work opportunities. Through entrepreneurship development, grant funding, mentorship and business development support, we work to ensure that self-employment and enterprise development become viable pathways into economic participation.

However, Chairperson, the scale of South Africa's youth unemployment challenge requires far more than the efforts of any single institution.

The recommendations emerging from the P20 Youth Parliament present an important opportunity for all of us to strengthen the coordination of youth development across government, organised labour, business, academia and civil society. They invite us to move beyond fragmented interventions towards a coherent system that creates sustainable pathways into employment, entrepreneurship and inclusive economic growth.

Ultimately, the question before us is not whether South Africa has programmes for young people. It does. The question is whether those programmes are sufficiently coordinated, adequately resourced and effectively aligned to move young people from exclusion to economic participation.

That, we believe, is the conversation that today's engagement should advance.

Chairperson, the National Youth Development Agency appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.

With your permission, I now invite the Chief Executive Officer of the National Youth Development Agency, Mr Ndumiso Kubheka-Hadebe, to take the Committee through the Agency's presentation.

I thank you