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Media release

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South Africans must dream big

According to Statistics SA the percentage of black youth between the ages of 25 and 34 in professional, managerial and technical fields has dropped by 2% in the last two decades.

"Currently, 60% of South Africa's unemployed youth has never worked before and their parents are better educated and equipped than they are. This is a sign of regression," said Mpumelelo Mkhabela, station manager of commercial talk radio station POWER 98.7, at the congress.

Mkhabela placed socio-economic issues under the spotlight and said that there is a gap between South African's aspirations and reality.

"South Africans must use their imagination and dream big until society resembles those dreams. Despite the country's dream of a better future for all, as envisaged in the National Development Plan, reality paints a bleak picture," Mkhabela said.

Leadership, politics, culture, the national self-esteem, economics, innovation, race relations and credit rating have all decreased.

"The average income per capita is declining and it is getting worse for the bottom 40% of the population. We experience an increase in predatory tendencies as the battle for reduced state resources among political elites gets daring."

A vicious circle

"Social tension is on the rise and the commitment to the Constitution and the rule of law is half-hearted at the pinnacle of the state. The mounting political rhetoric on expropriation and nationalisation is further fueling uncertainty. Yet, still we are drafting new policies while good policies already exist but are not implemented," Mkhabela said.

He highlighted the following characteristics of the vicious circle:

- A low level of ethics, respect for the law and low expectations;
- Low confidence and a lack of imagination;
- Slow investment, untapped potential and low growth;
- A slow pace of change and tension between business and the state;
- A low employment rate and tension between citizens and the state.

"In contrast, in the commendable circle the rule of law is ruthlessly observed and the ethics bar is high, and genuine partnerships instill trust. South Africa's imagination is unleashed, with investment confidence rising, and transformation gains pace. Black people have an increased share of the cake, and state resources are used wisely, with more decent jobs being created and lower tension between stakeholders."

Continuous dialogue

To change the vicious cycle into a virtuous one will ask that role-players not only unite when credit rating agencies come knocking.

"We will have to revive institutions such as Nedlac to ensure continuous dialogue by all stakeholders, and forge voluntary and innovative partnerships that work. A formal social compact may also help to strengthen alignment between growth, development and nation building. We should frown upon quick-fix, politically-biased empowerment shortcuts," Mkhabela said.

Mpumelelo Mkhabela, South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) Chairman and former Sowetan editor has joined Gauteng based commercial talk radio station POWER 98.7 as its station manager effective from 1 June 2016.

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