



**ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT YOUTH DAY
CELEBRATION**

ORLANDO STADIUM, SOWETO

16 JUNE 2018

Programme Director,
Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr Nathi Mthethwa,
Premier of Gauteng, Mr David Makhura,
Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Chairperson of the NYDA, Mr Sifiso Mtsweni,
Members of Parliament and provincial legislatures,
MECs, Mayors and Councillors,
Representatives of various youth formations,
Compatriots,

Sanibonani. Avuxeni. Dumelang. Goeie Dag.

It is just over two months since we gathered here in Orlando Stadium to bid farewell to Mama Winnie Madikizela Mandela, a great woman of fortitude who inspired generations of youth in the struggle for democracy.

Today, we gather here to commemorate and celebrate the heroic deeds of the youth of 1976 and all the Young Lions that came after them.

These were gallant freedom fighters who selflessly sacrificed their own lives for the liberation of their people.

Today, we also celebrate a new generation of young freedom fighters who have dedicated themselves to the struggle against poverty and inequality; the struggle for dignity, prosperity and justice for all.

From those who have come before them they have learnt the value of selflessness, discipline, hard work and an abiding love for the people.

As we seek to build a new, inclusive South Africa, we look to the energy and creativity of youth.

Young people have been at the centre of every decisive historical moment in the struggle against colonialism and apartheid.

Young people are catalysts of social change.

From the founders of the ANC Youth League in 1944, to the students who led the 1976 uprising, to the Young Lions of the 1980s, it is the youth of our country who hastened the demise of apartheid.

Even as we built a democratic South Africa, it was fearless young people who reminded us that liberation would not be complete until the wealth of the land is shared among its people.

The current generation of youth has therefore chosen as its mission the attainment of economic freedom.

Compatriots,

Youth continue to bear the brunt of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

They remain the hardest hit by disease, violent crime, drug abuse and underdevelopment.

We understand the frustration of young people who cannot find jobs, who do not have the skills and experience employers are looking for, and are unable to find the support they need to start their own businesses.

Our shared responsibility, as government, business, labour and civil society, is to develop pathways for young people into work.

It is this task to which we should be directing all our efforts and all our energies.

We are making progress in many areas.

The National Youth Development Agency has established a value chain of entrepreneurship which includes skills development training, development finance, mentorship, support and market linkages.

More than 2,500 start up companies have been provided with funding, creating more than 10,000 jobs in the economy.

Beyond this, more than 25,000 young people have been placed in job opportunities over the past three financial years.

Government has done much through its public employment programmes and investment in infrastructure to give priority to young people and women.

It introduced the Employment Tax Incentive to encourage companies to employ more young people.

Government, business, labour and civil society have begun preparations for a Jobs Summit, which will need to take extraordinary measures to create jobs on a scale that we have never before seen in this country.

It will need to forge a new social compact which mobilises all sections of society behind the task of growth and job creation.

We have demonstrated what is possible through working together.

The Youth Employment Service, which is an initiative led by the private sector and supported by government and labour, was launched earlier this year to bridge the gap between school and work.

With a number of large companies already involved, it aims to create a million work experience opportunities for young people over the next three years.

As part of this initiative, small businesses and micro-enterprises run by young people will get assistance through wage sponsorship and through business literacy and entrepreneurial training.

The challenge for unemployed youth is not only one of skills.

There are many graduates, who have completed university degrees, who are still unemployed.

This is a vast pool of skills and knowledge that is being wasted.

Society has invested a great deal in the education of these young people, but our economy is not benefiting from this investment.

On this Youth Day, we call on all companies – both in the public and private sector – to make a deliberate effort to seek out unemployed graduates and employ them.

It does not place a great burden on individual companies, but if taken up on a large scale, such a call could significantly reduce youth unemployment, while bringing much needed skills and capacity into the economy.

Employers need to understand that for our country to succeed, for their businesses to thrive, they must take responsibility for providing young people with the work experience they need.

They must realise that the only way to get work experience is to get work.

If we are to succeed in creating more jobs for young people, our economy needs to grow much faster – and for that it needs investment.

We have embarked on a massive investment drive that aims to attract \$100 billion into our economy over the next five years.

We are focusing on investment into those parts of the economy that have the greatest potential for growth and the creation of jobs.

We are focusing on investment that will create opportunities for young people in particular.

If we are to make effective use of this investment, young South Africans need to be equipped to participate in the fourth industrial revolution.

That is why we are investing so significantly in education.

We are making great progress in ensuring that no child, regardless of their circumstance, is denied access to education.

Despite significant challenges, we are continuously working to improve the quality of teaching and learning in our schools; progress that is reflected in the consistent improvement in the matric pass rate.

We are working both to improve the quality of education and the environment in which learning and teaching takes place.

This year, we have agreed that emergency measures are needed to ensure sanitation in schools is safe and hygienic.

We cannot lose another young life to unsafe school toilets.

We can no longer expose our children to illness, injury and the indignity of inadequate toilet facilities.

Fellow South Africans,

From the beginning of this year, students from poor backgrounds entering universities and colleges for the first time are receiving free education.

This is a great victory for young people.

It is a vindication of struggles that have been fought over many years for quality education that is free, accessible and relevant.

It will have a far-reaching effect on the lives of millions of youth, enabling them to acquire skills, find employment, build careers and enjoy an improving quality of life.

This will do much to break the cycle of poverty.

More than that, it will ensure that our economy is able to draw on a far larger pool of knowledge and expertise.

Having achieved this great milestone, young people now have a responsibility to make full use of the educational opportunities available.

Young people must go to school and pass.

They must work hard at institutions of higher learning, achieve outstanding results and use their skills to contribute to building a new society.

Fellow South Africans,

We look to the youth to continue to be at the forefront of the struggle for a non-sexist society.

The empowerment of women, especially young women, must be one of our central tasks as we seek to build an inclusive society.

We must ensure that young women have the same educational opportunities as their male counterparts, that they are equally able to compete for jobs and that they receive equal pay for equal work.

Young men and young women need to work together to put an end to all forms of violence against women, especially the devastating scourge of femicide.

The recent spate of murders of young women by young men is deeply disturbing and requires that, as a nation and as individuals, we take decisive action to end such crimes.

This generation of young South Africans has an opportunity to fundamentally change gender relations and to achieve full and meaningful equality between men and women in all spheres of life.

The challenges that our youth face are great, but they are not insurmountable.

We can overcome them if we work together.

We can overcome them if the youth take the lead and become agents of their own liberation.

Young people must be preoccupied with activities that contribute to making South Africa a better and safer country for all to live in.

This means that they must not engage in alcohol and drug abuse.

It means they must not participate in crime and corruption.

And more importantly, young people must keep themselves safe from HIV by using a condom, abstaining from early sexual activity and being tested regularly.

Fellow South Africans,

As we celebrate Youth Day in 2018, we recall the lives of two outstanding founders of the youth movement in our country, Tata Nelson Mandela and Mama Albertina Sisulu, whose centenaries we are marking this year.

These two giants embodied the values and the qualities from which we should all draw inspiration.

Tata Madiba and Mama Sisulu were always ready to serve as volunteers for the greater good of our people without any motive of personal gain.

They sacrificed their own interests to fight for the freedom of others.

The best way we can honour their sacrifices is to follow their example.

We must shun selfishness and strive for collective prosperity.

We must fight for the rights of others as much as we fight for our own.

We cannot stand idly by while the rights of others are violated, while there are people in the world who are still colonised, oppressed and exploited.

We cannot rest while there are still millions of people who go hungry, who do not have shelter, and who do not have work.

We all have a responsibility, each and every one of us, to do everything in our power to make the lives of others better.

The spirit of Tata Mandela and Mama Sisulu lives on in the young people of this country.

It lives on in their dreams, in their determination, in their struggle for a better life.

It lives on in their desire to be part of building a new nation of equality, prosperity and progress.

It lives on in their willingness to lend a hand, to be ever ready to say: 'Thuma Mina. Send Me'.

If we all do our part, we will all succeed.

I wish you all a happy Youth Day.

I thank you.