



public works

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MEDIA STATEMENT

Deputy Minister of Public Works Mr. Ntopile Kganyago at the NCOP's "Taking Parliament to the People sitting" in Limpopo.

Deputy Minister of Public Works Mr. Ntopile Kganyago has for the first time defended criticism in the media of government's job creation and poverty alleviation programme the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

Addressing a sitting of the National Council of Provinces' "Taking Parliament to the People" in Nkawkawa Limpopo today, Deputy Minister Kganyago disputed claims that government was shifting targets downwards as they became unattainable.

"According to these media reports, in preparation for the inevitable, i.e. that we would not be able to meet our target of 1 million jobs over five years, we have allegedly secretly started adjusting our figures, presumably downwards," said the Deputy Minister.

"We clearly indicated during the launch of the EPWP President Thabo Mbeki in May last year that we would create 1 million jobs over a period of five years," the Deputy Minister said.

Addressing specific charges that the EPWP created only temporary jobs, Deputy Minister Kganyago said:

"We have never said to our people that these would be permanent jobs. Indeed, while some of our people may become permanently employed, many will have to leave the programme. This is because the aim of the EPWP is to develop skill through classroom and practical training within a specified time frame. The period in which anyone must be in training under the EPWP is two years, not more. Thereafter they will be ready to enter the wage paying market or to start their own businesses", the Deputy Minister said.

“We have a duty to fight all the demons, particularly poverty and unemployment, which threaten to undermine our democracy. We also have a duty to fight the demons which emerge in the media sporadically whose sole purpose is to undermine the gains we have made over the past 11 years,” said Deputy Minister.

The event was hosted by NCOP Chairperson Mr. Johannes Mahlangu and members of the Limpopo Provincial Executive.

Deputy Minister Kganyago said Cabinet had already indicated the need for the EPWP to be up scaled with a view to creating more and not fewer jobs.

“This means that there is a need to significantly increase the targets and outputs, not to decrease them. The president has indicated this is necessary because of the nature of the challenges we are facing.

With a five year target of 200 000 per year, the Department of Public Works had co ordinated the creation of 200 000 gross jobs in its first year of which 170 000 were net jobs.

“This is way above the projected figures for the first year in which we were still setting up the EPWP structure including appointing staff and implementing EPWP guidelines,” said Deputy Minister Kganyago.

The EPWP had created most work opportunities in the infrastructure and environmental sectors. There remained huge potential for sustainable employment creation for lower skilled workers in the social sector (in early childhood development (ECD) and home-community-based care (HCBC).

During the first half of 2005, the DPW led the development of a plan for the large-scale expansion of ECD and HCBC. This plan would be implemented soon by the social sector departments (led by the Department of Social Development) and will contribute significantly in our upscaling project.

Gauteng remained the province with the highest percentage of youth participating in the EPWP with KwaZulu-Natal having the highest percentage of women.

Deputy Minister Kganyago stressed that skills development meant skilling black people but also creating jobs. Government would use its procurement and empowerment strategies to encourage the development of the emerging enterprises. He called for the improvement of living and working conditions, ownership share schemes, health and safety plus the appropriate skilling of workers in the construction sector.

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