

**Minister of Public Works  
Mr J Radebe  
28 June 1996**

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**At the launch of the Opportunities Industrialisation Centre (SA)**

Master of Ceremonies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, may I begin my presentation by extending a warm hand of welcome to Reverend Leon Sullivan.

Mr Sullivan is no stranger to these shores and their politics. You will recall the crucial role he played in the disinvestment campaign in this country when, in 1977, he initiated the Sullivan Principles, a code of conduct for US companies operating in South Africa, which became the standard for social responsibility and equal opportunity for companies in South Africa, as well as other parts of the world.

The Sullivan Principles are acknowledged to have been one of the most effective efforts to end discrimination against blacks in the country, and became a major platform on which others could speak for equal rights in South Africa against the apartheid system.

This is not the only commitment by Mr Sullivan towards the betterment of the less fortunate people. He is the President of the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help, which was set up to train 100 000 skilled workers, 100 000 newly developed farmers, and one million people in literacy, tied to health care, within the next decade.

Today, Mr Sullivan is bringing the Opportunities Industrialisation Centre to South Africa, under South Africa OIC, which seeks to develop marketable job skills, create jobs and upgrade the capacity of community-based organisations to address their own development needs.

What the OIC is doing is in line with the Government strategy under the Reconstruction and Development Programme, that is investing in infrastructure and skills, which will play a major role in the creation of new economic activities by providing means of accessing high technology goods and services in all areas of South Africa. This will require major investment in electrification, telecommunication and information technology.

The Government strategy also calls for an investment in people. This entails considerable improvement in the quality of formal education, an expansion and enhancement of training. Strategies in this area include:

- the rapid implementation of the National Qualifications Framework as the basis of certification of skills and lifelong learning.
- the transformation of our education system to ensure more appropriate curricula, equity and certification processes, and
- institutional changes to ensure that training programmes expand massively and respond better to national needs.

All of this needs an integrated approach, which implies a view to learning which rejects a rigid division between academic and applied, theory and practice, knowledge and skills, head and hand. Such divisions have characterised the organisation of curricula and the distribution of education opportunities in this country.

Such distinctions in curriculum and career choice have also been closely associated with the ethnic structure of economic opportunity and power in this country.

The Government believes that an integrated approach to education and training, linked to the development of a new National Qualification Framework based on a system of credits for learning outcome achieved will encourage creative work on the design of curricula and the recognition of learning attainments, wherever education and training are offered.

It will open doors of opportunity for people whose academic or career paths have been needlessly blocked because their prior knowledge, acquired informally or by work experience, has not been assessed or certified, or because their qualifications have not been recognised for admission to further learning or employment purposes.

We can never claim to have a full democracy in South Africa whilst some of our people are still leading a life

of abject poverty and squalor. The transformation process is therefore going to be long, costly and not easy.

For example, South Africa has achieved the most developed and well-resourced system of education and training on the African continent, with the highest participation rates at all levels.

At the same time, millions of adult South Africans are functionally illiterate and some of our schools are resembling a battle zone.

To reverse this legacy, we as South Africans must take joint responsibility to help build a just and equitable system of education for all citizens with a common culture to learning and development.

We must develop a system of education and training that provides equal opportunities to all, irrespective of race, colour, sex, class, religion, geographical, political or other opinion.

It must address the development of knowledge and skills that can be used to produce high quality goods and services, in such a way as to enable us to develop our cultures, our society and our economy.

The RDP requires that our people must be involved in the decision-making process, in implementation, in job opportunities requiring new skills, and in managing and governing our society.

A key focus throughout the RDP is on ensuring a full and equal role for women and youth in every aspect of our economy and society.

Girls and women are frequently denied education and training opportunities because they are female. They are often educated and trained to fulfil traditional roles which perpetuate their oppression.

Our education system should be widened to include campaigns and information which should open up a wider range of learning opportunities for women, which in turn should lead to a wide range of income generating forms of employment.

The youth of our country are our most important resource. Effort is required to ensure that they are equipped to play a major role in the reconstruction and development of South Africa. We must, as a matter of urgency engage in programmes that are aimed at addressing the needs of our youth, in particular on education and training, job creation and recreation.

Poverty is the single greatest burden of South Africa's people. In attacking poverty and deprivation, the RDP aims to set South Africa on the road to creating growth in all parts of the economy, greater equity through redistribution and a sustainable development.

Human resources development and skills creation will underpin the rate at which our economic development takes place. Strong evidence demonstrates that the social rate of return on investment in education, training, health and nutrition exceeds that on physical infrastructure because of the contribution a literate, numerate and conceptually capable population makes to consolidation of democracy. Investing in people is a key component of policies to expand on income-generating opportunities and productivity for the underemployed and unemployed.

The Government can only achieve its economic objectives if it establishes transparent, participatory and accountable policymaking procedures in both the public and private sectors. The Government, the trade union and civic movements and other relevant organisations of civil society must co-operate in formulating economic policy.

The OIC has chosen as the centre for its vocational training programme the province of Kwa Zulu-Natal, an area that has been torn apart by political violence. The centre will service the unemployed, marginalised youth, including former combatants, returning exiles and other previously disadvantaged members of our society.

The ultimate goal of the programme is to improve the lives of the target beneficiaries and assist them in contributing actively to the economy.

Those who will be trained in marketable vocational skills will then either be placed into employment or assisted in establishing small business enterprises supporting construction projects and infrastructure

development.

With those words, may I take this opportunity to welcome the OIC to South Africa. On behalf of the Government, I wish to express our sincere appreciation of the contribution you are making towards the upliftment of our people and to our country's economic development.

Through the workshops we have given you for the centre, the Department of Public Works is trying to demonstrate how much we value our relationship with you. We look forward to greater joint ventures.

I thank you.

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