

**SPEECH BY LIMPOPO EDUCATION MEC ISHMAEL
KGETJEPE AT THE LAUNCH OF THE STUDENT
TRAINING FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL PROMOTION
(STEP), UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO, MANKWENG
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Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Greetings to everyone,

I am delighted to be here this morning and I must indicate that it is quite a rich and rewarding experience to be part of this launch of the Student Training For Entrepreneurial Promotion (STEP). We are delighted to know that there are initiatives in our institutions of Higher Learning that strive to promote entrepreneurial potential of our people, especially our young men and women. We all agree that as much as we need to create jobs, there has to be a shift from talking about creating jobs for youth to talking about youth inventing jobs. This launch takes place in the centenary celebration year of Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu. These veterans believed that education and training can change the world and empower all South Africans, especially the youth. In their honor, we must do all that is possible to nurture young business talent and open their prospects for future entrepreneurial endeavors. It also happens at a time when the ruling party, the African National Congress, resolved at its recent two day Lekgotla and directed government to move with urgency to develop and implement a stimulus package to ignite growth that will lead to the creation of jobs.

President Cyril Ramaphosa indicated that this stimulus package must comprise among others, an increased support for entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for youth and women, as well as small and medium businesses. Our President also stressed as another stimulus, exactly what we are here for today, which is training for unemployed young South Africans with the necessary skills to compete in a rapidly changing economy. Today demonstrates our desire that our young people should indeed take up opportunities with the commitment to be successful and to serve communities and the country. It further demonstrates that we are not satisfied that our young people are consumers of products created elsewhere but rather they must be creators of these opportunities. Our economy is facing serious challenges and unemployment numbers should worry all of us and it is our expressed hope that this initiative can turn the large pool of the unemployed into job creators, as opposed to job seekers. To meet this challenge, we should encourage, educate and empower young entrepreneurs.

This is an acknowledgement that there are countless young people with ideas that need polishing, who we can help to unleash change. We cannot let any potential go to waste. We need to enterprise and entrepreneurial development to create a vibrant middle class and diversified economy.

It is our cherished hope that we shall as various stakeholders give this programme the necessary support so that it becomes successful in bringing to reality the dreams of thousands of our people, who everyday aspire to create and grow successful enterprise and thus give back their quota to the transformative agenda that our country has set itself. We call on all partners to indeed support youth entrepreneurship, self-employment and youth led businesses. This programme must be able to emphasize that entrepreneurship is about innovating, breaking down barriers, taking risks and showing that new business models can tackle long standing problems. I believe all of us gathered here cherish the power of entrepreneurship as we launch this specific programme.

We know as people charged with the responsibility of ensuring access to basic education that success at this level will come about as a consequence of success that we achieve in our primary and secondary schools. It is in this regard the Department of Basic Education is working on introducing Entrepreneurship in its Curriculum. The President of our country Cyril Ramaphosa emphasized this need when delivering his opening address of the Global Entrepreneurship Congress in Sandton Convention Centre where he called for entrepreneurship to be included in the basic education school curriculum in order to create greater prosperity. He said: **“There is much more we can do, entrepreneurship must be part of the school curriculum so that young people must from an early age be encouraged to be problem solvers”** We have to equip children with entrepreneurial skills while they are still at school while we also reach out to those that have already left school. In this way, entrepreneurship would be seen as a viable career option. Such an investment will ensure that we have less young people languishing in poverty as we see today.

There is a need to create entrepreneurs early on, who must realize a vision of an economically developed nation by creating jobs for everyone. The reality is, if government is to deliver increased welfare to its people, sustainable economic development requires diversification, which is precisely where entrepreneurship and innovation play their role in contributing to economic prosperity and to social cohesion. There has never been any doubt that, to successfully meet some of our challenges, in the main, poverty, inequality and unemployment, we need this drive that will vigorously develop entrepreneurship. The other reality is that needs are always emerging that cannot always be met by government, whose action is often restrained by budgetary issues. Our people must be able, through this program to spot opportunities that will indeed create jobs for everyone. Sir Richard Branson, an English business magnate puts it very accurately and he says: **“Business opportunities are like buses, there is always another one coming”**.

This programme must be able to give the proper training so that none of our people miss an entrepreneurial opportunity, which if grabbed and used wisely can surely, can be a solution to the problems of the needy and making the necessary impact on their lives.

With this launch today, we are essentially launching the future of this country. The National Development Plan, Vision 2030, proclaims that: **“Education, Training and innovation are central to South Africa’s long term development. They are core elements in eliminating poverty and reducing inequality, and the foundations of an equal society. Education empowers people to define their identity, take control of their lives, raise healthy families, take part confidently in developing a just society and play an effective role in the politics and governance of their communities”**.

We all know that this University is a special and distinctive institution which deservedly enjoys an enviable reputation for academic excellence.

You have a well-entrenched culture, tradition and experience of developing and nurturing exceptional intellectual talent in students over the years. We can only be proud to associate ourselves with this outstanding institution that provides high quality formative education for its students, more especially here in Limpopo.

It is our hope that those who take part in this programme will apply themselves with zest and energy to improve their skills and make a greater success of their life in their chosen fields of business and careers.

As you are rightfully aware, we live in an era where knowledge is growing in importance in addressing the world's pressing problems and when public expectations and demands of higher education are intensifying. These demands can only mean many unprecedented opportunities for our teaching, for our research and for our global connections and reach.

We are confident that you shall continue to pursue the intellectual project as guided by the core principles that universities are meant to embody as per the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education which are: equity and redress, democratization, development, quality, effectiveness and

efficiency, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability.

We wish you every success in this programme that will see all of us realizing our shared vision of a prosperous and secure South Africa.

Together we move South Africa forward!

I thank you.