



**Keynote Address by the Minister of Energy, Ms Dipuo Peters, MP, on the
occasion of the BPSA-Wits Targeting Talent Programme Launch
05 July 2013, University of Witwatersrand**

Programme Director

Vice Chancellor and Principal of Wits University, Prof. Adam Habib

Former Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof. Loyiso Nongxa

The Chairperson of BP, Ms Thandi Orleyn

The CEO, Mr. Gerard Derbesy

The Regional CSI Manager, Mrs Busi Sithole

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Greetings to you all

Allow me to express gratitude for having been invited to witness this momentous event.

It is also an honour for me to be here with you in a very important month, a month dedicated to our struggle icon and father of democracy, Seaparankwe Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

We continue to keep him, his family and his medical team in our prayers, hoping that his medical condition will improve.

On July 18, people from all walks of life, from all corners of the world, will be celebrating his birthday through a number of acts of goodwill.

Government has called on all South Africans to dedicate 67 minutes of their time on Mandela Day to help change their communities and South Africa for the better.

This year's Mandela Day is guided by the theme: ***“Take Action, Inspire Change: Make Everyday a Mandela Day”***, with a focus on food security, shelter and literacy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This momentous occasion resonates with Ntate Mandela's passion for the betterment of young people's lives through education.

We are inspired by his words as inscribed in his book, “Long Walk to Freedom”. He said, and I quote:

“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farmworkers can become the president of a great nation”

19 years later, these powerful words should continue to inspire us to remain unwavering and relentless in ensuring access to quality education.

This collaborative venture between BP and the University of Witwatersrand is but one instrument through which this injunction by Nelson Mandela is realized.

We therefore applaud and congratulate both BP and Wits on this milestone!

This and similar initiatives are responsive to the magnitude of challenges that young people grapple with, access to higher education and training and unemployment, chief among them. Now, more than ever, is the time for the private sector, civil society and

other stakeholders to join forces with the Government to find amicable solutions to the plight of young people.

The 2011 Census Statistics revealed that the youth constitutes close to 60 percent of the country's population. The overall unemployment rate stood at 25 percent. What is further alarming is that those between the ages of 25 and 34 constitute 71 percent of the unemployed.

We laud the BPSA-Wits Targeting Talent Programme as it reaches out disadvantaged learners, particularly from predominantly rural areas. It is through such programmes that ***"...the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farmworkers can become the president of a great nation..."***

It is my conviction that some of the schools from which you recruit are in unacceptable conditions that are not conducive for quality teaching and learning. With immense challenges confronting most rural schools, career counseling and the nurturing of talent are pipe dreams.

Yours is a necessary intervention that will ensure the realization of young people's dreams and aspirations. Moreover, it bridges the gaps that makes the transition from high schools to institutions of higher learning seem impossible.

More often than not, the state of our basic education system is decried, but it is extremely rare to find solutions from the very people who lament its inadequacies.

As Government, we are heartened by all efforts aimed the improving our education standards, offering young people prestigious opportunities to unleash and realize their potential.

Not only is the BP-Wits Targeting Talent Programme narrowing the transitional gap from high school to institutions of higher learning, it aids in the improvement of results, particularly in Mathematics and Science.

I trust that the learners highly appreciate this golden opportunity as it assists them in the most crucial stages of their schooling, further capacitating them to aptly adapt in a post-school environment.

Beyond the successful completion of undergraduate qualifications, the country's graduates are turned down by many prospective employers, citing poor preparedness and not possessing the requisite graduate attributes.

This enjoins BP and other prospective employers to play a huge role in grooming future graduates through programmes that will enhance their employability prospects. Companies would have to themselves an opportunity to participate in the future graduates' academic lives, ensuring that whatever graduate attributes they require, are embedded in the students' university lives.

Developments in the energy space have ushered a number of opportunities for young people to pursue lucrative careers. A necessary precondition is for learners to take up courses in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

The resilience of any economy including that of our beloved country is underpinned by robust energy policies, plans and infrastructure, which enable enterprise and other societal activity to thrive. To a large degree that is the situation we find ourselves in. Cabinet recently approved the draft Energy Plan for public consultation and we are well on our way to improving the electricity generation challenges that we face.

For it to be sustained, energy infrastructure requires talents in a variety of fields not just engineering alone. For example, energy law experts are required in the conclusion of treaties such as the one on Inga that we recently concluded.

In the near future project management and a variety of engineering expertise is going to be required for the upgrading of our refineries to meet cleaner fuel standards. A shale gas future cannot be realised in South Africa without expertise in the geosciences and economics. Civil works in a nuclear build are a boon for Civil Engineers who have to see to the correct concrete mixtures. I am just mentioning these, to illustrate the

possibilities emanating from the energy infrastructure re-investment that this country is embarking upon.

We therefore welcome the commitment by BP to skills development in this country. In doing so they are just not creating their own pipeline but one which will sustain even the market for the liquid fuels. What is more exciting is that the TTP initiative is driven at the very top of the organisation as a contribution to a broader societal goal. Indeed skills development is a very strategic issue for any organisation. We would hope will be part of the deliverables of all future leaders of BP. The progress of each of the learners in this programme must then be tracked to ensure that where support is necessary, it can be provided within means.

This programme in partnership with other stakeholders can be used as a living laboratory on how we can best approach the challenge of Talent development and its appropriate deployment. For this initiative to succeed, leadership will be required to guide the learners even as they get absorbed into the workforce. I also would like WITS Management to realise that once this initiative has matured, WITS may have to consider sharing the learners with other institutions so as to alleviate the pressure on itself as also to help expand best practice.

One of the avenues for talent development that I believe has not been fully explored is partnership with business associations. I therefore would want to call upon the business associations and their affiliates such as SAPIA to consider internships within their institutions which invariably expose the graduates to a myriad of disciplines from which they can identify areas of career focus.

In conclusion, allow me to once again borrow from the words of Madiba.

In a letter written in prison, addressed to his son, Makgatho, he said, and I quote:

“The issues that agitate humanity today call for trained minds and the man who is deficient in this respect is crippled because he is not in possession of the tools and equipment necessary to ensure success and victory in the service of the country and people”

Allow me to echo his sentiments and challenge all of you to play a meaningful role in training young minds to be in possession of the expertise and knowledge necessary to ensure that our country thrives.

I thank you all.