

Consensus emerges on NDP implementation

When Telkom chairman Jabu Mabuza criticised President Jacob Zuma at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland a year ago, a turning point was reached on the National Development Plan (NDP).



Bobby Godsell says government and business are "talking constructively" over the NDP. Image: Twitter

Mabuza said the government was not taking the business sector's views seriously over the NDP. Surprisingly, Zuma agreed.

Meetings were organised where Cabinet members listened to the concerns of business. The establishment of government-business working groups, tasked with identifying and tackling areas of concern, followed.

The concerns were concentrated in the areas of infrastructure development, regulatory uncertainty, inclusive growth, education and skills, and labour relations - all of which the NDP identifies as critical.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions' (Cosatu's) objections to the NDP have not prevented an unprecedented effort by the government and business to push for its implementation.

Now Cosatu has made clear it does not object to the plan as a whole, while business is conceding that the labour movement has made good points in some of its evidence and arguments.

"This is the first time in my 40 years in business dealing with government that I've witnessed government and business talking so concretely and so constructively," says Bobby Godsell, national planning commissioner and chairman of Business Leadership SA.

Neil Coleman, Cosatu's strategy co-ordinator, says its criticism of the plan is not a "blanket objection" to the NDP. The trade federation had reached an agreement with the government and the ANC that only the areas where there was agreement would be implemented.

Sizwe Nxasana, chief executive of financial services group FirstRand and a member of Business Leadership SA's executive committee, says Cosatu input has been helpful. "I think Cosatu certainly identifies gaps or inaccuracies in the plan and in its assumptions, data, conclusions or recommendations."

But Nxasana adds that measures such as infrastructure projects and education reform are already being implemented.

National Planning Commission chairman Trevor Manuel says he is not losing sleep over an agreement at an ANC alliance meeting not to implement the economic chapter of the plan. "The point is that now people can take a view on how it all hangs together," he said.

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