



**MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NPC/IOM MIGRATION CONFERENCE: MIGRATION AS A
DEVELOPMENT CATALYST**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR
PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION, MS. MAROPENE
RAMOKGOPA**

20 AUGUST 2024, 09h30

**Programme Director,
Deputy Chairperson of the National Planning Commission,
Professor Tinyiko Maluleke,
Resident Coordinator of the United Nations (UN) in South Africa, Mr
Nelson Muffuh,
The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Chief of Mission
in South Africa, Ms Lily Sanya,
Resident Representative of the United Nations Development
Programme (UNDP) in South Africa Mr Maxwell Gomera,
Commissioners of the National Planning Commission,
Distinguished guests,
Members of the Media,**

Good morning,

On behalf of the South African government and the National Planning Commission (NPC), I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all our guests and participants to what promises to be a fruitful and inspiring four days as we grapple with issues related to migration.

I extend a special welcome to those representing our neighbours in the region and to our partners, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The matter of migration requires that we take a collective approach that serves to benefit and protect all parties.

Migration has received increased media attention, not only in South Africa, but globally over the recent period. This highlights that migration is an issue that affects not only us in the region but is a dynamic indicator of our current global circumstances. It is important to note that we should use what is being reported, despite it being relatively negative, to understand what it means as we seek solutions and plan policies for the future, realising that migration will continue to be a reality.

As the hosts of this conference, it is important that I start by providing you with some insight into who we are as South Africa and what defines us.

Globally and regionally, there is the recognition that South Africa is characterised by a range of diverse languages, cultures and religions. Even before the colonial period on the continent, the indigenous population's diversity stemmed from changes due to the migration of groups from the north. These communities, each with their own cultural and language diversity, settled in different parts of the country.

Then, of course, we had the colonial period. The patterns in South Africa differed from the rest of the colonised world. Not only did we have several waves of different European colonisers, but some of them brought enslaved people from other parts of Africa and the Far East to work as labourers here. Then they colonised the country differently from others by settling here and, in the process, opened the borders to other settlers from Western countries who came here to improve their fortunes.

The descendants of these settler and slave communities as well as the indigenous African communities remain and make up the population of South Africa. Therefore, we are well-versed in understanding the positive and negative outcomes of migration and how diverse cultures, languages and religions combine to create the richness we experience daily.

What this indicates as well, despite the outcry and negative targeting of migrants across the globe, is that migration is not a new phenomenon, and we should understand that the basis for these reactions may lie elsewhere.

It is important to recognise that migration, when facilitated appropriately, can lead to positive outcomes for the host nation and countries of origin. Therefore, it is imperative that migrants are encouraged to utilise a well-structured pathway to enter their host nation. This can be achieved by adhering to established procedures and the formal documentation of migrants, which can enable government to accurately account for the numbers and contributions of migrants to the country.

As we navigate these complexities associated with migration, it is crucial to acknowledge and to understand that migration is a multifaceted issue

that cannot be resolved by any single government in isolation. A successful approach necessitates a multisectoral approach, encompassing collaboration across various government departments, and engaging with business communities, organisations, and the rest of society.

This kind of well-coordinated strategy is essential in addressing the diverse challenges and opportunities that migration presents. It is only through joint efforts that we can ensure that the systems in place are not only effective, but also equitable and humane.

In South Africa, internal migration is increasingly becoming a source of debate and concern. Certain provinces, which are seen as economic centres in the country, attract a disproportionate number of people. This further strains the existing resources and infrastructure in those areas. This matter must be addressed by confronting the legacy of apartheid spatial planning that continues to affect us today.

We should also focus on the impact of poorly planned migration on vulnerable groups, such as children, women, the elderly, and people living with disabilities. Research has shown that these demographics often bear the brunt of inadequate migration policies, which lead to increased challenges that demand urgent attention.

Considering these complexities, I urge stakeholders at all levels to continually engage about how we can collectively enhance our migration frameworks. Through fostering an environment of cooperation and sharing best practices, we can build a comprehensive approach that addresses the needs of both migrants and the broader community.

It is essential to create an inclusive dialogue that allows for the exchange of ideas and experiences, steering us toward informed decisions that reflect our commitment to social equity and justice.

Lastly, I want to highlight our value of Ubuntu and its underlying concept of humanity and respect for human rights. In South Africa, our Constitution and Bill of Rights embody these values, which in turn form the basis for all our policies and legislation.

In the spirit of “I am what I am because we all are” or “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu”, our diversity should be celebrated and not be in opposition to each other. I am aware that this conference will address many practical and very difficult matters faced by immigrants and their destination countries, but I want to appeal to you to find the humanity in the solutions as you undertake those discussions.

I thank you.