

# Ramphela calls for SA to abandon empowerment

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Black economic empowerment (BEE) has not worked in transforming the economy in a fundamental way and should be abandoned, Agang SA leader Mamphela Ramphela said last week.



Mamphela Ramphela (Image: Wiki Images)

Rather than the state intervening to force business to change - which benefited only a small minority - real transformation would come from a transformed education system and investing more in skills training, Ramphela said.

In an address at a business breakfast function of think-tank Accelerate Cape Town, Ramphela recommended the abolition of the inefficient and wasteful Sector Education and Training Authorities (Setas) and the use of the R5bn to R6bn they collected each year from companies for skills and entrepreneurial development.

"BEE has failed," Dr Ramphela said. "Failed to create a more inclusive and equal society. The key to achieving this would be to ensure that the 4m unemployed young people were incorporated into the economy and improving the quality of education," she added.

## Education is crucial

"Education is the sure and tested way out of poverty and that has been the biggest failure of this government," Ramphela said.

Elements of Agang's economic programme - which are due to be unveiled at the end of this month - would be to create a thriving, competitive economy. Agriculture and mining had to be reformed and modernised, and competition law had to be strengthened to remove barriers to entry into the economy and increase competition in key sectors such as iron and steel, paper, chemicals, telecommunications and energy.

Ramphela said the Competition Commission did not have sufficient bite and had to be given more teeth to act against cartels.

She believed South Africa was at the crossroads and, if it did not change course, would face a very serious crisis, adding that corruption was rife and 20 years of poor economic leadership had led to appalling growth rates and inadequate job creation.

"South Africa needs an urgent change in government. We have a government that fails on all key indicators - the economy, education, health, and general safety and security.

## **Erosion of trust**

"The erosion of trust between business, government and civil society has created an almost complete disconnect in the economy. Something needs to be fixed very urgently if we are to prosper," she said.

"For millions of South Africans we have not come far enough, fast enough. Rampant corruption and the conflation of the ruling party, government and the state has left a lot of citizens completely confused. People have not seen the fruits of freedom," she added.

She noted that people were reluctant to vote the African National Congress (ANC) out of power for fear that they would lose their pensions and social grants.

Ramphela urged South Africans to "wake up".

"The foundations of our constitutional democracy are being systematically attacked - the judicial system, the freedom of the press, the accountability of government, human rights and freedom of citizens are being totally undermined," she added.

She said that if Agang were in government it would immediately legislate for a minimum of 15 years' imprisonment for any public official found guilty of corruption regardless of the amount, and for any member of the public found to have corrupted a public official regardless of the amount involved.

"Public servants found guilty of corruption would be banned from any future employment by the state forever," she said.

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