



NSBE (SA)

NATIONAL SOCIETY OF BLACK ENGINEERS OF SOUTH AFRICA "BRIDGING THE ENGINEERING SKILLS GAP"

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MEDIA RELEASE

TO: PRINT & ELECTRONIC MEDIA HOUSES
FROM: MDU MLABA
SUBJECT: ESKOM CRISIS
DATE: 19 FEBRUARY 2019

NSBE STATEMENT ON THE ESKOM CRISIS

The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) unequivocally abhor the careless, inappropriate and disparaging remarks made by Mr Senzo Mchunu, insinuating that the crisis at Eskom is due to "failure of black excellence".

Given the history of our country, it is unacceptable that instead of dealing with the crisis that is negatively affecting all of us, some of our leaders are resorting to dividing us by using the race card.

Making general statements on the competency and integrity of Black Engineers and Managers instead of using the proper channels that are available in our country to deal with wrongdoers is distasteful and speaks to black leaders who do not think blacks are capable. The utterances by Cde Mchunu reflect the ignorance by some of our political leaders of the challenges faced by Black Professionals in the workplace. We have made significant strides as Black Professionals and we are proud of ourselves. We will not allow our leaders to

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address us as the colonialist did, thinking that blacks are only good as “hewers of wood and drawers of water”. The sources of problems at Eskom are well known and documented. There are political problems, management problems, technical problems and corruption. For example, it is not a secret that the government did not allow Eskom to build the new power stations at the time they were advised to do so, instead the government delayed the new build programme and forced Eskom to utilize their units to full capacity all the time without doing proper maintenance. Refer to the research report submitted to the Faculty of Engineering & Built Environment at the University of the Witwatersrand by our Senior Member - Ms. Seponono Kekana. The title of the report is “An investigation into the impact of emphasis on profitability and security of electricity supply as compared to Total Asset Management in a Power Plant”.


Later on, our government took the decision to build all the new power stations at the same time and thereby plunging Eskom to an enormous debt! It is well documented and alleged that some politicians benefitted from the contracts from these projects. Singling out Black Professionals in this mess is disingenuous and misrepresentation of the facts. Now politicians like Cde Mchunu, suddenly assume the roles of technical experts, ignore sound advices from those in the technical know-how, and play politics even to the extent of speaking against transformation – playing in the hands of those who want to keep the old order at all cost!

We also would like to remind our leaders that black people did not start studying bachelor of science in engineering after 1994 and we are completely offended by their call for white engineers instead of all engineers to come out and assist. This notion that ‘experienced and competent engineers’ are only white is one we reject with contempt it deserves.

It appears that our qualifications and experience only qualify us to be “perpetual trainees”, we want to tell you that we are more than good enough. Our education & training is comparable to the best in the world. This is the time for us to run these plants and train young graduates coming out of universities and other institutions of higher learning. Leave pensioners to enjoy their pension.

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We call upon Cde Mchunu to publicly apologize for his reckless utterances and for Minister Pravin Gordhan to continue the engagement and work with us and our experienced South African Engineers (black and white) instead of bringing engineers from overseas.

The challenges at Eskom are fundamentally political and politicians need to take responsibility instead of wanting to blame Black Engineers and Managers, expecting workers to pay the price for their bad decisions.

In conclusion, we refuse to be blamed as Black Engineers for the crisis at Eskom. We refuse to be blamed because of the colour of our skin in a democratic society with a government we have elected into power. We implore our leaders to take responsibility for a change, instead of using the race card to divide engineers in the country and remind us of our painful history.

We are available to get involved to solve problems, provide a good service to all South Africans and move our country forward.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mdu Mlaba', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Mdu Mlaba
President

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