***PRESS RELEASE***

**Green Transition must deliver jobs and sustainable livelihoods for South Africa's youth, says NBI**

**Green Livelihoods Summit calls for coordinated action to turn green investment into employment, entrepreneurship and inclusive economic growth**

**Johannesburg, 13 October 2026 -** South Africa's transition to a greener economy presents a significant opportunity to address youth unemployment, but realising this potential will require a shift from fragmented initiatives towards coordinated action that connects investment, skills development and sustainable livelihoods.

This was a central message emerging from the Green Livelihoods Summit: Powering South Africa's Green Economy Future, convened by the National Business Initiative (NBI) in partnership with the Presidency through the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI) and endorsed by the Just Energy Transition Project Management Unit (JET PMU) and the Just Energy Transition Skills Desk.

The Summit brought together representatives from government, business, academia, training institutions, youth employment organisations and development partners to explore how South Africa can translate emerging green economy opportunities into meaningful employment and economic participation for young people and particularly young women.

Opening the Summit, NBI CEO Shameela Soobramoney emphasised that the green economy is already creating opportunities, but deliberate and coordinated action is needed to ensure these translate into sustainable livelihoods.

She outlined an ambition to enable 100,000 green jobs by 2030, calling for clearer signals from employers on skills requirements, better alignment of funding, greater access to contracts for small businesses and shared measures of progress.

"The Green Economy is not a future opportunity. It is already taking shape around us. Our responsibility now is to ensure that investment translates into real jobs, viable enterprises and sustainable livelihoods for young people. This requires us to move beyond working in silos and commit to collective action, shared accountability and measurable outcomes," said Soobramoney.

**Connecting skills development with economic opportunities**

A key theme throughout the Summit was the need to ensure that South Africa's education and training systems respond to evolving labour market demands, with clearer pathways from skills development into employment and entrepreneurship.

*Rudi Dicks, Head of the Project Management Office in the Presidency,* emphasised that economic growth, investment and training alone would not resolve the country's youth unemployment crisis.

He highlighted the ambition to support an additional 1.8 million young people into employment by 2030 and the importance of prioritising sectors with strong employment potential, including emerging green value chains and enterprise development.

"We cannot assume that economic growth or skills training will automatically translate into employment for young people. We need deliberate interventions that connect young people to real opportunities, support enterprise development and ensure that the commitments we make are translated into measurable outcomes," said Dicks.

The importance of aligning skills development with a rapidly changing labour market was reinforced by *Presha Ramsarup, Director of the Centre for Researching Education and Labour (REAL) at the University of the Witwatersrand.*

Ramsarup highlighted the challenges of forecasting skills demand across emerging green industries, particularly given evolving technologies, inconsistent labour market data and geographical inequalities in training provision.

"The challenge is not simply identifying how many green jobs will be created, but understanding where those opportunities will emerge, how skills requirements are changing and whether our training systems are equipped to respond. We need a more flexible, locally responsive approach to skills development that connects people to real economic opportunities and ensures that communities affected by the transition are not left behind," said Ramsarup.

**NBI launches report on building South Africa's green workforce pipeline**

The Summit also marked the launch of the NBI's report, *Powering Pathways: Building South Africa's Green Workforce Pipeline- A Skills Development Zones Approach*, which examines how skills development can be better aligned with emerging green economy opportunities.

The report proposes a place-based Skills Development Zones (SDZs) approach, focusing on Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape and the Northern Cape, where opportunities are emerging in renewable energy and transmission, new energy vehicles and green hydrogen, respectively.

Rather than establishing new institutions, the approach seeks to strengthen coordination between employers, training providers, government and communities, ensuring that skills development responds to industry demand while supporting enterprise development and broader economic inclusion.

The report also emphasises the importance of integrating gender equity, disability inclusion and broader social inclusion into the design and implementation of skills interventions.

**From dialogue to implementation**

The Summit's plenary discussions reinforced the need to move beyond policy commitments towards coordinated action that delivers measurable employment outcomes. Panellists called for stronger alignment between government, business and development partners to ensure that skills development, investment and industrialisation create sustainable livelihoods, particularly for young people and communities affected by the energy transition.

For the NBI, the discussions underscored the importance of business leadership and collective action in ensuring that South Africa's green transition contributes to a more inclusive, competitive and sustainable economy.

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