ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHEMES FOR LOW-SKILLED WORKERS ONGOING, COMMITTEE HEARS

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The Select Committee on Trade and Industry, Economic Development, Small Business Development, Tourism, Employment and Labour heard on Tuesday that the establishment of schemes for low-skilled workers is ongoing and that an employment framework will be drawn up.

The Department of Employment and Labour came to brief the committee on its annual performance plan and said that it had achieved 79% of its performance targets.

The Director-General Mr Thobile Lamati said that the review of the national minimum wage was delayed, due to the unavailability of the quarterly labour statistics. However, it is now underway and will consider what the employer can afford to pay, the state of the economy and inflation, among other issues.

The Chairperson of the committee Mr Mandla Rayi said it was difficult to understand how some provinces are unable to meet performance targets when others do meet their targets. “How are provinces being assisted to achieve 100% performance of targets in the current financial year?” he asked. The department responded by saying that underperformance in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga is as a result of special enforcement services. This year performance targets have also been adjusted to take cognisance of the impact of Covid-19.

Committee Members asked questions about other departmental programmes, including the number of work seekers already on the system, their placement, and their skills. “Is the department able to say what skills are required by government entities and local government. Municipalities complain about lack of capacity; what kind of skills are on the database?” Mr Rayi asked.

Committee Member Mr Tim Brauteseth said it was important for government departments to procure furniture from supported employment enterprises. ”The department should consider making a percentage of furniture for government to be procured from these factories.”

Members also asked about bills concluded at National Economic and Development and Labour Council, but which had not yet reached Parliament.

Mr Lamati said the department will deal decisively with irregular expenditure until it achieved a unqualified audit opinion. “Each occurrence of irregular expenditure is investigated and, if there is a need to take disciplinary action, we do that.” A new supply chain policy is also being implemented, he said.

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