**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**TOO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN BUT DON’T EARN, COMMITTEE HEARS**

South Africa’s supply of graduate labour is growing faster than the economy can absorb them. This was a view expressed by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) during a meeting with the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation. The committee was briefed by the Department of Science and Technology, the HSRC and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) on their internship programmes and Presidential Youth Employment Initiatives.

The HSRC said the unemployment rate of graduates between the ages of 15 and 24 was much higher than that of graduates aged 25 to 34. The committee heard there is a strong correlation between the level of education a young person has and the opportunities they can access. Mr Waseem Carrim, CEO at the NYDA, said: “Every year at least one million young people leave school in South Africa, where 28 per cent enter post-schooling education, another 15 per cent find work while the remaining 57 per cent sit outside the labour market.”

The department and HRSC said their joint internship programmes were aimed at providing work experience for unemployed graduates through placement in relevant institutions. The department said it was working on improving existing initiatives, such as the development of an electronic system to track young people as they seek out opportunities in the knowledge economy.

The NYDA said it understood the difficulties industries have in attracting talent while there is an oversupply of young people who are looking for work. The NYDA further called for disabled youths to be included in internship programmes.

Ms Shirin Motala, Director for Impact and Research Development at the HSRC, said a lack of relevant work experience, limited social capital and insufficient information for job searching compounds the problem of youth unemployment. The department said internship programmes are aimed at increasing the pool of capable human resources for the public sector, sciences councils and the industry as a whole.

Members of the Higher Education committee unanimously expressed their concerns about the sustainability and impact of the public employment initiatives across government departments and called for retention strategies for youth employment beyond six months or a year.

The committee welcomed the increase in the intake of interns with disabilities for the financial year 2022/23 compared to the previous financial year, when targets were not met.

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**2 June 2023**