Organisations raised concerns over the power appropriated to the Minister in Section 15 of the Employment Equity Amendment Bill when it comes to the setting of targets. The organisations made submissions to the Amendment Bill which is before the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour and indicated that targets still needed to be determined sectorally.

Among the organisations that made oral submissions on the third day included AgriSA, Business Unity South Africa (Busa), and Telkom.

Business Unity South Africa’s Mr Kaizer Moyane told the committee that the Amendment Bill before Parliament has omitted the requirement for the Minister to consult sectors before setting the targets, as agreed at Nedlac (National Economic Development and Labour Council).

“It was agreed that the Minister will consult with the relevant sectors when determining what the numerical targets should be. It also concerns Busa that the legislation does not cover what should happen in an event where there are disagreements after consultations.”

Mr Moyane said Busa was not trying to stand in the way of transformation, instead it wants transformation to be achieved in a rational manner that could not be constitutionally challenged.

AgriSA’s Mr Christo van de Rheede said although they acknowledge that there was a lack of transformation in the sector, the power of the Minister should be curbed and that there needed to be sector-based consultations.

“The imposition of one-size-fits-all approach for targets would unlikely achieve the results we all yearn for. The agricultural sector is faced with a skills gap, and this remains a challenge in filling critical posts in the sector.”

He said careers in agriculture required good foundational education in mathematics and agricultural science subjects.

Telkom’s Siyabonga Mahlangu lamented the current tough economic climate and said it was difficult to make appointments that may be necessitated by the new numerical targets. “The unilateral imposition of targets by the Minister, which may not be practically implementable by electronic communications, operators and industry stakeholders, may have the unintended effect of threatening existing jobs in a difficult economic climate.”

Members sought clarity on initiatives that the organisations were doing in changing the lack of transformation. The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Lindelwa Dunjwa, allayed fears that the Bill seemed to have changed from what was agreed at Nedlac. “There is still a long way for parties and stakeholders to influence the final product of the Bill. The public participation processes that the committee enters into will also be undertaken from the ministry and department’s side.”

She said the Bill has not changed and that the committee will further deliberate on it.

**By Sibongile Maputi**
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