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A Coherent, and Focussed Strategy Required to Make Sure South Africa Benefits from 4IR

Johannesburg, 12 September 2019 – South Africa needs a coherent and focused strategy on how to take advantage of opportunities that will be presented by the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), so said Council for Scientific and Industrial Research CEO Thulani Dlamini.

Speaking at the annual Southern African Metals and Engineering Indaba currently taking place at the IDC Conference Centre, Mr Dlamini said there is no denying that the 4IR is already happening and as a country South Africa needs to not only make sure that it is ready to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the 4IR but to also be in a position to deal with the concerns that have been raised including job security and impact on global competitiveness.

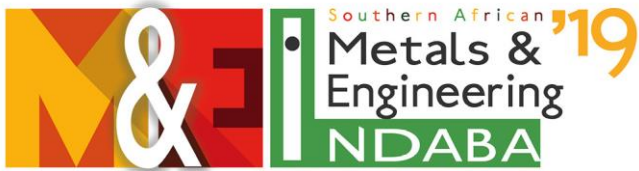
“Countries such as Japan, Germany and South Korea have formulated coherent strategies aimed at ensuring that they increase their countries’ competitive advantage. South Africa needs to do the same. Failure to do this will result in South Africa getting left behind and unable to compete at a global level, Mr Dlamini said.”

He said there is also a need for the country to make concerted efforts in developing human capital and equipping them with high-end skills that will be needed to take advantage of the 4IR.

Speaking on the same panel, Deputy Minister of Higher Education Buti Manamela said Government is already putting numerous initiatives in place to ensure that South Africa does not get left behind.

“We recognise the rapid increase in technological advancements and we are making sure that the public sector responds with favourable policies that will support and enhance the country’s ability to take advantage of the 4IR,” the Deputy Minister said.

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He said in its efforts to make sure that South Africa does not get left behind Government, in 2018, participated in the South Africa/European Union 4IR dialogue and will feed the outcomes of that dialogue into Government Policy development.

He added that as a country we also need to grow high level research capabilities and ensure stronger links between research institutions and business.

Department of Trade and Industry’s Future Industrial Production and Technology Chief Director Ilse Karg said South Africa has an advantage over developed countries to be a leader in 4IR due to its young and growing population.

“More than 50% of our population are young people under the age of 35. We, therefore, need to design skills development programmes that will make sure that young people are trained and employable. We have, for the last ten years, been running a pilot programme that has been an enormous success and we will scale it up nationally in collaboration with other Government departments including the Department of Education,” Ms Karg said.

Speaking on a panel which reflected on a growing Chinese Presence in South Africa, Black Business Council’s Judy Nwokedi said South Africa needs to make sure that small and medium enterprises benefit from China’s presence in South Africa.

“We also need to ensure that we don’t get exploited as a country. We must safeguard against exploitation of resources and cheap labour and we must ensure that Chinese loans don’t come with conditions similar to the Structural Adjustment Programmes imposed by the World Bank and the IMF when providing funding to third world countries.”

BRICS Business Council Member Elias Monage said South Africa lacks focus and leadership alignment between Government and business. This he said is the reason why South Africa’s manufacturing sector has eroded over the last ten years.

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“Part of the reason why China is taking over the world is that its Government and businesses work together, they are focused and they take decisive decisions together. We ought to learn from them and our Government needs to support and partner with the manufacturing sector if we are to stand a chance to compete against China.”

Ends

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