

# Workplace diversity key to transforming SA

Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa says diversity in the workplace is critical for nation building and promoting social cohesion.



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"It contributes to the development of a country that is based on inclusion, not exclusion on dignity, not dehumanisation on opportunity, not marginalisation," he said.

Speaking at the inaugural Employment Equity Awards held in Midrand on Thursday, Deputy President Ramaphosa said without equity, workplaces will never be truly South African.

"Much of the work we are doing focuses on fighting the injustices suffered by the majority - black people and women. But we should be careful not to neglect other groups of people who are also exposed to discrimination and marginalisation," he said.

The Deputy President said focus must also be placed on people with disabilities.

"The lack of opportunity is, for them, no less devastating. Their rights are no less important. Not only do they experience discrimination in the workplace, they also experience discrimination at school, in communities, in broader society.

"Affirming people with disabilities requires not only a more deliberate approach to recruitment, employment and promotion."

Deputy President Ramaphosa said employers must recognise the impediments that people with disabilities face and take active measures to remove them.

## **Women empowerment**

The Deputy President said although progress has been made in giving women equal opportunities, they still face serious challenges.

"Many experience discriminatory practices such as pay inequality, sexual harassment and intimidation. It is a cause for concern that despite improvements in educational qualifications, women occupy few senior positions in government and even fewer in the private sector."

He said the importance of advancing women in the workplace and actively involving them in the economy is underscored in the National Development Plan.

"We need to address social expectations about the role of women in the family and assert that men are parents too. Company policies, practices and attitudes need to accommodate the possibility of shared parenting," he said.

It was the first time awards of this nature were held in South Africa to acknowledge employers who further the cause of the Employment Equity Act.

## **2015 Employment Equity Awards**

In total, 131 companies participated in the 2015 Employment Equity Awards nomination process. Petro SA, Old Mutual, Pick 'n Pay, SABC, Eskom, Nedbank, Standard Bank and the Legal Aid Board were awarded in the various categories.

Pick 'n Pay - the overall private sector winner - was recognised for the implementation of Employment Equity in the workplace.

Pick 'n Pay representative Susan Ackerman told SAnews that they are extremely honoured to be recognised by the Department of Labour.

"Recognising our people is what brought us here," she said.

Ackerman called on other companies to recognise their people and push for equality.

Nedbank was also recognised for implementing the Employment Equity. Nedbank HR Executive: Transformation and Employment Relations, Dr Thulane Ngele, said it felt good to get recognition.

"This tells us that we are doing good work," he said.

Standard Bank representative Moses Mochine said being recognised at the awards is affirmation that they are on the right path.

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