

# Government, hospitality sector agree to hire 60% locals

Home Affairs Minister Malusi Gigaba and representatives from the hospitality sector have agreed on the 60% employment of South Africans in the sector. This, after the Minister met with representatives of the sector in Pretoria.



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Addressing the media after the meeting, Minister Gigaba explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to look at civic issues affecting citizens, as well as the approach to management of international migration. "The burning issue currently is the grave concern that had been raised with us by many citizens, labour stakeholders and affected government departments. The crux of the matter, as observed, is that many businesses, particularly in the construction and hospitality sectors, do not hire South African workers, preferring migrants," the Minister said.

Minister Gigaba said South Africa has already seen unfortunate incidents of attacks on foreign nationals, some of which flowing from employment practices with a serious dent on the country's reputation internationally. "I made it quite clear from the start of the meeting that we needed a very strong partnership with business, and that it was important to clarify issues and act accordingly even before we are pressurised by the public.

"As we have said, this carries potential to fuel perceptions that businesses exploit migrants to lower wages and conditions, while locals suffer in a sea of poverty and want," the Minister said.

The perception has been that businesses prefer to employ undocumented foreign nationals over South Africans. In some

instances, it is said undocumented foreign nationals are preferred because they accept anything offered.

According to Minister Gigaba, the hospitality sector representatives were honest to concede that problems were raised with them before. "The stakeholders raised some of their views on reasons why certain sectors may not be employing citizens, ranging from wages to perceptions around work ethics," he said.

Chief Executive Officer of the Federated Hospitality Association of Southern Africa (FEDHASA), Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, said the sector is prepared to work with the department in ensuring compliance in the sector. He said there is a need to conduct research to determine the number of undocumented persons employed in the sector. "We cannot ignore the problem in the sector. We are willing to assist the department in enforcing the laws," he said.

Tshivhengwa admitted that within the sector there are few businesses that are not enforcing the law. "We want the sector to comply," he said.

FEDHASA has been representing the South African Hospitality Industry on a local, provincial, national and global level to protect the interests of all stakeholders of the industry, thereby enabling members to achieve their objectives.

Following the meeting with the Minister, the sector welcomed government's initiative and agreed to do all in their power to ensure that the objectives are met. The meeting, therefore, agreed on practical steps to take swiftly to deal with these issues.

### **An agreement was reached with all stakeholders present on the need to do the following:**

- Respond urgently and sensitively to the concerns raised by citizens regarding the sector.
- Improve employment practices, with citizens prioritised, and not prejudiced. For citizens, these issues are fundamental as they relate to satisfying their human needs as they impact greatly on living standards.
- Enforce, with support of the associations, rules and regulations.
- Stakeholder engagement for the dissemination of information, legislation, and regulations.
- Target businesses for inspections and impose penalties accordingly. Section 49 (3) of the Immigration Act, 2002 stipulates that anyone who knowingly employs an illegal foreigner or a foreigner in violation of this Act, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine or to imprisonment as determined by the courts.

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