

SU hosts dialogue on pursuing a socially just and sustainable economy in SA

Professors Thuli Madonsela and Mark Swilling from Stellenbosch University recently hosted a number of South Africa's leading economists at the Artscape in Cape Town who were convened for a dialogue on South Africa's economy from a social justice and sustainability perspective.



Image source: [Artscape](#)

Titled 'Towards a socially just and sustainable economy', speakers included former statistician general Dr Pali Lehohla; Dr Nicky Padaychee; Dr Miriam Altman; Prof. Haroon Borat; COSATU's Matthew Parks, Dr Mao Angua Amis from the African Centre for a Green Economy; Dr Amiena Bayat, University of the Western Cape; and Prof. Fiona Tregenna, University of Johannesburg, among others.

Mosa Plan for Social Justice

The gathering was a thematic think-tank dialogue convened under the Mosa Plan for Social Justice (Social Justice M-Plan) spearheaded by Madonsela who is the Stellenbosch University's Law Faculty Trust Chair in Social Justice. The ambitious M-Plan seeks to harness academic, business and broader civil society input to catalyse South Africa's efforts towards ending poverty and reducing structural inequality by 2030 in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and National Development Plan.

Madonsela noted that the Social Justice M-Plan aims "to create tools for leveraging data analytics to predict the likely socio-economic impact of planned policies, laws and programmes, before implementation. Planned changes include improving state capacity for managing existing resources while reinforcing accountability through leveraging the people as the eyes and ears of democracy through social accountability".

Deliberate and intentional stewardship

Discussions focused on a deliberate and intentional stewardship of the economy through a very clear economic policy. Ben Turok delivered a hard-hitting critique of the lack of a clear economic pathway, compounded by what he referred to as the "lost nine years marked by lack of economic direction, state capture and pillaging of public resources". Lehohla, stressed the importance of evidence-based planning, demonstrating the various gaps between policy intentions and action in public governance processes, mainly using the education sector as a case study.

The dialogue stressed the need for a clear vision for South Africa's economic direction and progress. The dialogue will be followed up by small expert group comprising people with diverse points of view who will craft a policy-relevant synthesis paper that defines what needs to be done to achieve a socially just and sustainable economy. Madonsela's team will be hosting similar Social Justice M-Plan thematic dialogues in partnership with other academic institutions, business and broader civil society. The next dialogue on women and land is scheduled to take place on 11 April at STIAS in Stellenbosch.

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