

Government to set up fund for informal business support

BERNARD SATHEKGE

PRESIDENT Jacob Zuma met with captains of industry on Friday during the Presidential Business Working Group session in Pretoria and announced that the government was in the process of launching a fund to support the informal business sector.

The Presidential Business Working Group was first convened in February 2013 and comprises the business sector and government. Its central objective is to assess the status of economic development and job creation.

Xolani Qubeka, the newly elected general-secretary of the Black Business Council (BBC) and also the CEO of the Small Business Development Institute (SBDI) said: "In the long-term, it is important for both government and business to continue engaging in the interest of the country, but government must be able to respond immediately and set up programmes of action."

"To address skewed spatial development, a government fund is being

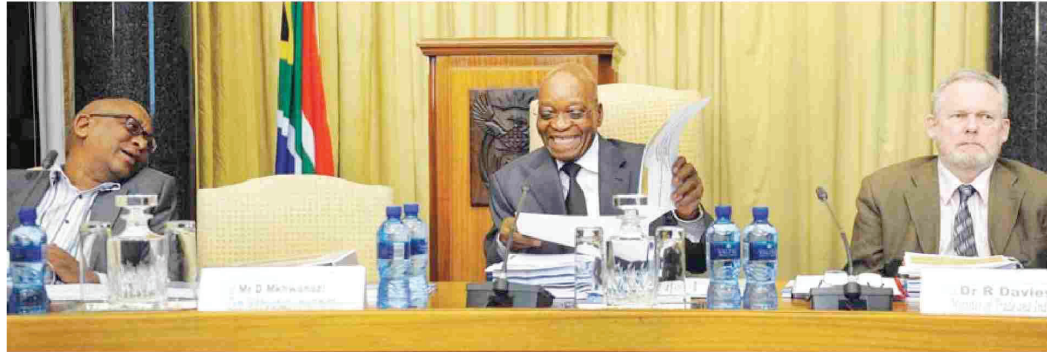
launched to support informal sector enterprises, especially in the townships," Zuma said.

The meeting on Friday assessed progress and the implementation of action plans in areas including education and skills development, infrastructure, labour regulatory environment, regulatory impact on investment and economic growth.

Five task teams, co-chaired by government and business, updated the Presidential Working Group on plans developed and actions initiated in the past 15 months.

The task teams identified the scaling up of work-integrated learning and work-based learning in order for learners to complete their studies and called for support for the 18 strategic integrated projects (SIPS) skills needs.

They also highlighted that **parties must ensure that the quality of entrepreneurship education is improved and also support the work being done by the National Education Collaboration Trust**



PURSuing ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: President Jacob Zuma recently announced plans by government to support informal enterprises, saying this will help address skewed spatial development. PICTURE: ELMOND JIVANE

and other foundations supporting the improved quality of education.

The infrastructure task team focused on measures to support the National Infrastructure Plan with specific focus on three priorities which are the establishing of complementary measures to support new investment, increasing the levels of local procurement by supporting local production and

assisting in assessing both the macro and micro economic costs.

In addition, the government has updated the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) website which will reflect high-level details of all SIPs that will appear on the website while business will provide feedback on its experience as well as suggestions for improvement.

The PICC will host quarterly meetings with business on the infrastructure build programme, update business on developments and create a forum for business to make inputs on the overall infrastructure build programme, linking to localisation efforts in moving towards 75% local content targets set by government.

In terms of the labour market given

the current environment, the task team focused on measures to reduce workplace conflict and facilitate constructive labour relations, in particular by engaging with business and labour on skills development including improvement of labour regulations.

"Among the key actions for this task team is the creation of a social partnership between business and government, with employment creation as the core objective and improving private sector job creation opportunities through regulatory efficiency and certainty," the Presidency said.

All stakeholders have agreed to keep working together in the interest of maintaining momentum in the implementation of the NDP.

Qubeka said the BBC wants demonstrable proof that government is serious about radical economic transformation.

"The majority of our people demand some of the findings presented by the task team be implemented."

bernards@thenewage.co.za