

**Employment and Labour Minister, Thulas Nxesi, has called for the collaboration between his department and social partners towards the creation of a “Vision Zero” – a workplace free of accidents and diseases.**

“We have to work with organised business to ensure compliance and to assist them to act as responsible citizens. This is especially the case in the majority of workplaces.

The Minister said unions and shop stewards also need to rise to the occasion to safeguard the conditions of their members and to report non-compliance. “That also means inspectors have to respond timeously and effectively to compliance”, he said. The Minister said it was crucial for inspectors to be adequately capacitated to provide the services the Department offers.

He said achieving Vision Zero means moving towards a trained health and safety officer in every workplace.

In high-risk sector, such as mining and construction, this has assisted in reducing the statistics for injuries and fatalities.

The Minister said: “We require OHS inspectors of a high calibre who have been fully trained and are fully operational to service the clients of the Department through the OHS Act and its 21 Regulations and numerous incorporated Standards. The OHS Inspector will need to display competence in the following areas: qualifications, knowledge, skills and the right attitude and passion towards the work that he/she has applied for – together with the requisite experience. And of course, the level of inspection will vary from the highly technical to the more general OHS issues. There is a specific role to support and advise SMMEs where resources are more limited – but compliance is still required”.

Department of Employment and Labour Director-General, Thobile Lamati said not much has been done to prepare people for 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution. He asked the question, “How do we respond to new risks and opportunities brought about by 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution?” Lamati said health and safety was not about safety management systems but, “about duty of care”.

The Director-General said over the years the Department has observed that self-regulation does not work. He said the intention has been to focus on sectors that do not have systems. He said the amended OHS Bill would be prescriptive. He also said in the amended OHS Bill for the first time workers would refuse to work in dangerous work environments. He said there will also be a push for the passing of the bill into an Act this year.

Lamati said inspectors have a responsibility to ensure that labour legislation should not be an exercise in ethics, “But it actually works”. He said there was a need to establish a credible labour inspection system – and this was vital to ensuring of safe work environments and decent work.

He said the Department has expectations of an effective labour inspection that faces the challenges of the labour market.