**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Now is the time for business and government to tackle SA’s high rate of youth unemployment**

If ever there was a time for business, government and educators to work together to fight the high unemployment rate among SA’s youth, it is now. Preparing our youth for a mindset of life-lasting learning is critical to drive SA’s competitiveness, especially in the face of a changing workforce, says Dion Shango, CEO of PwC Southern Africa and CEO-elect for PwC Africa.

June is celebrated as Youth Month in SA and focuses in particular on 16 June – Youth Day. Unemployment, poverty, and inequality are just some of the socio-economic issues that young people face. This year’s youth month marks 25 years of democracy and there are high expectations among the public in general, businesses, educators and other stakeholders that President Cyril Ramaphosa will address some of these issues next week in his State of the Nation Address.

Without any work experience or upskilling, we stand to lose a considerable portion of our young people that will not be absorbed into the workplace – this has a significant impact on the economy not only today but also tomorrow, Shango adds.

While fighting current levels of youth unemployment as a matter of urgency, SA must also build a pipeline of future talent that can actively take part in the age of emerging technology and innovation.

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By 2020, millennials are predicted to form 50% of the global workforce, according to PwC global research. The research revealed that millennials have a number of expectations in the workplace. The biggest attraction for millennials to an employer is the opportunity for career progression. The highest-ranking benefit they want is sustained access to training and development – above financial reward.

“This is an important time for businesses, educators, government and other stakeholders to reflect on and consider our efforts to upskill and prepare young people for the workplace,” adds Shirley Machaba, Diversity & Inclusion Leader for PwC Africa and CEO-elect for PwC Southern Africa. Education alone is not enough – we need to prioritise skills-based learning for young people to prepare them for the job market.

At PwC we have launched a number of initiatives for young people to enter into our organisation. These include internships, mentorships, coaching and bursaries. We have also invested in several initiatives to nurture future business leaders, such as our ‘Foundation for the Future’ programme. This initiative exposes talented young graduates to various operational disciplines within the advisory line of service and provides them with opportunities to be mentored by directors and senior managers. Our ‘skilled for the future’ project is another development initiative in partnership with the Department of Education. This programme is designed to inspire learners and aims to equip them with leadership and self-development skills.

Solving SA’s youth unemployment rate will take a long-term and multi-concerted effort by government, business leaders, NGOs, trainers and educators. “This is the time for government, businesses and other stakeholders to work together to uplift the development of our young people,” concludes Machaba.

Ends.

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