

BMF GAUTENG 2ND BIENNIAL POLICY CONFERENCE OPENING REMARKS
BY LANGA MANQELE, BMF GAUTENG CHAIRPERSON
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Programme Directors: Mpho Moseki, Thabi Leoka and Tshepo Marumule
Leadership of the BMF and the fraternal organisations
Captains of Industry and Government Leaders
International Guests and Diplomatic Missions.
Our distinguished guest speakers

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

We would like to thank the IDC for partnering with us once again in delivering this 2nd Biennial Policy Conference of the BMF in Gauteng.

We would also like to convey the BMF President's apology, due to prior commitments he could not join us today. He asked that we convey his well wishes!

The BMF President tasked all provincial structures to help craft a clear response to the deepening disorientation on the economic policy debate in South Africa. This conference is a build up to that clear economic policy response by the BMF.

Without stealing thunder from our distinguished speakers, let me highlight three crucial questions that guided us on the choice of our conference theme, the quality of our speakers and the incisive topics they will address today:

1. How to grow the South African economy?
2. How to uplift millions of South Africans from poverty and reduce inequality?
3. How to strengthen the capacity of institutions charged with development?

Ladies and gentlemen this conference must debate, figure out and recommend a credible set of policy choices and trades-offs required to make progress.

We must hasten to add that we are well aware of the raging debates and the polarising positions adopted by many on economic policy, ours is to tell the truth!

When one listens carefully to these street-wise polarising arguments, a European traveller would be forgiven for thinking that South Africa was and remains the subject of the historian Eric Hobsbawm's dramatic lecture titled '*Barbarism: A User's Guide*'.

In his lecture, Eric likened the term 'street-wise' "*to the actual adaptation of people to living in a society without the rules...*"

To put this differently, former President Mbeki calls it "*shepherding the street-wise who are prone to taking the backstreets, back to the main roads where traffic rules apply.*" President Mbeki cautioned the BMF in June 2015, and I quote him here:

"In addition to shepherding the 'street-wise', we would also have to contend with articulate and eloquent counsel, which repeatedly advises a de-contextualised universalism which, in reality, does not help to negotiate the specific fault lines imposed by our specific historical circumstances."

Firstly and inevitably, in answering the three questions we posed earlier this conference would have to "*contend with articulate and eloquent counsel*" that suggests in a 'street-wise' manner, that South Africa must maintain the status quo.

Secondly, this conference would have to unpack what President Thabo Mbeki has called "*a de-contextualised universalism*" that suggests for instance that South Africa is beholden - lock, stock and barrel - to domestic and international currents far greater if not hostile to its sovereign aspirations and that;

Thirdly, because of these domestic and international currents, South Africa cannot "*negotiate the specific fault lines imposed by [its] specific historical circumstances.*"

So as we deliberate on these fragile discussions, let us heed the economists Ramos, Ranieri and Lammens when they cautioned that:

"Inclusive growth implies participation and benefit sharing. [But] participation without benefit sharing will make growth unjust and sharing benefits without participation will make it a welfare outcome".

Thank you.