



Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates

My Country aligns itself with the statement delivered by Cuba on behalf the G77 and China.

Allow me to congratulate you and the Bureau on your election and thank you ary

The decline in school enrolment can be attributed to COVID-19. Many schools, particularly in deep rural areas and poor households were not ready or equipped for alternative schooling methods such as remote teaching or online learning during the lockdown. This situation exacerbated the obvious socio-economic disparities in the

It also intensified the existing hardships of already poverty-stricken families and communities.

We believe that education transcends matters of access, but serves further as a tool that cuts across all sectors and one that should be used to tackle existing societal inequalities and bring about sustainable development through social justice. South Africa has several strategies that tackle the intersectionality of social ills.

Given the high levels of child poverty and hunger in South Africa, our National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) for example, was established to provide daily meals to children attending public schools, including Early Childhood Development Centres, across the country. Its objectives are to improve the health and nutritional status of school-

educational outcomes. Almost 10 million children across the country are receiving adequate meals through this programme and ensures that no child goes hungry.

South Africans who are Not in Education, Employment or Training, also known as NEET increased from 38.8% in 2014 to 46.3% in 2021 with the majority (85.8%) being African and females constituting more than half (55.7%).

This figure is alarming as it poses the risk of us not tackling and halting intergenerational poverty, inequality, unemployment and low levels of skills development all of which have a negative effect on South African youth and our ability to realize a demographic dividend for the country.

Initiatives to address NEET include our National Student Financial Aid Scheme, which was established by government to assist students with academic ability from poor and disadvantaged families with loans and bursaries to attend universities and public TVET colleges throughout the country.

National Student Financial Aid Scheme disbursed a total of R20,6 billion (1.1 billion USD) in 2018, increasing to R27.7 billion (1.5 billion USD) in 2019 and R47.3 billion (over 2.5 billion USD) in the 2022 financial year to deserving poor students who would otherwise never be able to study at tertiary level.

Initiatives to tackling youth unemployment, include the Presidential Employment Stimulus, a state-run initiative launched in 2020 to create 800,000 job opportunities by

devastated by Covid-19. Harambee, initiative was established in 2011 in partnership with the private sector. The program provides first-time jobseekers with skills needed



sustainable development as per our commitments, our Constitution and our Population Policy.

I thank you.