



SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE NYDA EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA, DR. SUNSHINE MYENDE ON THE OCCASION OF SDA EDUCATION DAY

13 September 2025

Pastor Nhlanhla Buthelezi

I am Dr. Sunshine Myende, and for those who may not know — this is my church. I grew up right in this church, and in fact my own father is a pastor, so standing before you today is not only an honour, but a deeply personal moment for me.

It brings me great joy to speak at such an important programme — one that not only brings us together as young people of faith but challenges us to reflect, grow, and act.

As we gather during Heritage Month, I found myself asking: *What does heritage mean to us as young people?*

At its core, heritage refers to the collective memories, traditions, and tangible legacies passed down from one generation to the next — giving us a sense of identity, purpose, and continuity into the future.

We come from a rich and complex history in South Africa — one that should unite us as a people and empower us to chart a way forward. But sadly, we have become increasingly fragmented.

Today, we live in a time marked by high unemployment, inequality, and social exclusion — and as young people, we bear the brunt of these realities. But I want to be clear: that is not what defines us. Especially as young people from historically disadvantaged communities — we are not defined by poverty, by marginalisation, or by social grants.

What defines us, Mfundisi, is a future filled with potential: a highly skilled youth, an employable youth, a self-reliant, capable, and self-sustaining youth.



And that is the vision we are committed to at the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA). We believe that when the youth of South Africa look at our history, they should be inspired — not discouraged. You should see yourselves as change agents in your communities, not victims of your circumstances. But that change doesn't happen automatically. We must also take responsibility for our development. And that journey — toward empowerment, agency, and transformation — starts with education.

Isaiah 40: 30-31 - Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Even the strongest among us — as young people — will at times feel tired, overwhelmed, or uncertain. This verse doesn't shy away from that truth. It reminds us that exhaustion is not weakness; it's part of the human experience.

As the NYDA, we see daily the pressures young people face. But we also see something else: resilience. A spirit that refuses to give up. The same spirit Isaiah speaks of.

At the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), our mission is exactly in line with the message in Isaiah: to renew the strength of young people across South Africa — not only spiritually, but also socially, economically, and educationally.

The promise in Isaiah is that those who wait on the Lord — who trust Him, who seek His guidance — will find new strength. That strength doesn't just get us through the day; it helps us soar. It gives our youth the power to dream beyond limitation and rise above circumstance.

Education is one of the ways God renews our strength. It opens our minds, unlocks our potential, and equips us to lead. When we invest in education — not just academic, but skills development, moral and spiritual learning — we are investing in young people who will 'mount up with wings like eagles.

At the NYDA, we are committed to ensuring that the youth of South Africa are not left weary and unsupported. Whether it's through skills development, entrepreneurship programmes, or educational support, our goal is to partner with you to walk and not faint, to run and not grow weary.



At the NYDA we have what we call the NYS Programme which is a program where we place young people in initiatives in their communities to help them gain work experience but it is more than just volunteering — it's a pathway to purpose.

We give young people the opportunity to serve their communities, gain work experience, and build character. Through community service, young people gain discipline, teamwork, and leadership skills that open doors to employment or further education.

"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength..." — When you serve others, you find new strength in yourself.

Whether it's helping with local health initiatives, supporting education projects, or assisting in environmental clean-ups — SDA youth are perfectly positioned to lead these efforts through their strong values and commitment to service.

Furthermore, we know unemployment is one of the biggest challenges facing our youth. That's why the NYDA is driving programmes that link young people to real job opportunities — through job placement, workplace readiness training, and partnerships with employers.

We help young people prepare for interviews, build professional CVs, and gain the confidence to walk through the doors God opens for them.

If you've been praying for a job — we want to be part of the answer.

"They shall run and not be weary..." — With the right support, our youth can thrive in the workplace, not just survive.

However, we must remember not every young person will find a job — some are born to create them. That's why we offer training, mentorship, and funding opportunities to support youth-owned businesses. From small startups to growing enterprises, the NYDA is here to walk the journey with you.

We've seen young people open salons, tech companies, agri-businesses, and more — and it all starts with an idea, a bit of courage, and the right support.

"They shall mount up with wings like eagles..." — Entrepreneurship gives our youth the power to rise above limitation and transform their communities.



And as young people of faith, your businesses can be built not just for profit, but for purpose — grounded in integrity, compassion, and a desire to serve others.

As Seventh-day Adventist youth, you are not just the future — you are the present. You are called to lead, to innovate, and to uplift.

Whether through serving in the NYS, securing a job, or starting a business, the NYDA is your partner in the journey. We believe in your potential — and more importantly, so does God.

“They shall run and not grow weary, they shall walk and not faint.” Let us walk together — in faith, in purpose, and in action.

Thank you, and may God bless you.