

CNBC

Power Lunch (Stephen Gunnion)

05 May 09 - 12:52

5 Minutes 36 Seconds

Stephen Gunnion: Great strides have been made towards turning South Africa into a democratic and prosperous society since 1994 but many mistakes have also been made and these can become critical if not addressed. That's according to the Dinokeng Scenarios which were launched this morning. Dinokeng brings together 35 prominent leaders from across the public, private and civil society to debate possible futures for the country. The convenors of the group include Dr Mamphela Ramphele, the Rev. Njongonkulu Ndungane, Graca Machel, Rick Menell, Bob Head and Dr Vincent Maphai who joins us now in the studio. Thanks very much for coming in. Why Dinokeng? How do you think this can influence the way forward for the country?

Vincent Maphai: Well, first of all we think any dialogue that involves the diversity and profile of leadership that we have in Dinokeng is good enough to influence and raise debate and the key thing is we are not an activist body. We were really a think tank. We were trying to see what possible ways South Africa could develop and begin to share all of that with our constituencies but most importantly, to open the debate to the whole of society.

Stephen Gunnion: How do you do that? How do you motivate a society and bring everybody in?

Vincent Maphai: Well, first of all we launched this morning and we are going into the second phase where we will be taking the scenarios to the various parts of the country rural. We will publish them and this interview is I guess, one of those ways of saying we are involved in all of this and the media has been wonderful across the board.

Stephen Gunnion: Is there a concern that Dinokeng could turn into a talk shop with no influence over government policies and business? How do you actually put it into action?

Vincent Maphai: You know, all we can do is do what we had intended to do which was, we will raise issues as honestly as possible and we were not concerned that people would disagree with us. Our major concern was that people should not dismiss us as mere dreamers who didn't know what we were talking about. But even before we launched today, once we have done the first phase of the scenarios we actually took them to various stakeholders including government, including all the major parties and their reaction was generally 'you are on track' and surprisingly they were saying 'you actually need to be much more bold than you are, don't hold back'. And our sense is that the country is ready for this honest dialogue but most importantly, the country would definitely want to see the way forward but we are not an implementing agent and we hope the various constituencies will pick it up and move on.

Stephen Gunnion: At what level is government involved in Dinokeng?

Vincent Maphai: Not as government. We never invited government. We invited political parties and all of them were involved. We specifically took a decision we don't want the top leadership of the parties because they would normally come in to defend party position rather than to engage in dialogue. We targeted members of parties who were sufficiently influential in their parties but also sufficiently flexible to express their own point of view and we got the best of both I believe.

Stephen Gunnion: Dr Maphai, in the preamble to the launch Dinokeng says mistakes have been made in the past 15 years. Can you give examples of the mistakes that you would like to address going forward?

Vincent Maphai: Well, I think first of all – and I can give you many of those – there were more mistakes than things that were right but we have actually identified that within the catalogue of numerous mistakes we identified in health, in education, in safety and security, we have identified actually an underlying layer of key issues. One is that we are a country without strong leadership with vision and we are talking across the country. There may be objectives, there may be managerial cabinet ministers but we do not have an overriding vision which every South African understands. We can talk about non-racialism, you can talk about non-sexism but they've become slogans. I think that's the first one and linked to that we are a country without overriding values. I cannot think of

any South African who can say as a South African, I will stand and die for the following three values. We don't have them. And we believe a country without visionary leadership and a country without strong values is lost and add to that which is a key issue, government capacity is very weak and we believe where there has not been delivery it was not for lack of money, it was not for lack of skilled people outside government – it was just the reluctance of government to top-end the best people in the country and that is why we have municipalities that are largely dysfunctional, not because there are no people who can do their work but because we put wrong people there because they were political allies and we believe those are fundamental things that need to be got right if you are going to get other things going.

Stephen Gunnion: Dr Maphai, I think this is a conversation that we will have to continue on another day because we're out of time today. That's Dr Vincent Maphai, convenor of the Dinokeng Scenarios.