

ARTICLE FOR SYFRETS ON THE RDP

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The White Paper on the RDP is not much more specific than the original political document that was published. It is still full of rather abstract, very laudable good intentions without spelling out in any concrete detail what the priority of expenditure is going to be, nor what the amounts will be that will be allocated for the various programmes envisaged in the RDP. It is more a philosophical document and from that point of view, I suppose the private sector can take comfort from the statements made in the document regarding the role of the private sector, the need for fiscal discipline, etc. What advice if any can I then give to the private sector in general with regard to how they can usefully react towards the RDP White Paper and any subsequent developments as far as the Reconstruction and Development programme is concerned?

1. It depends very much from which sector in the economy the business operates, is it footloose or is it site bound, is it a service industry, is it into manufacturing, is it

primary, secondary, tertiary. In other words, all this is important in locating one's position vis a vis the RDP because on reading the RDP it is quite clear that its scope is so encompassing that almost no aspect of South African life escapes its attention, and therefore it is quite easy for any business to position itself within the scope and to try and determine to what extent it can interact with the intentions of the RDP.

2. With the above in mind it is important therefore that a business should study both the regional political document as well as the White Paper very carefully to determine what the intentions are of the RDP. Again, I must emphasise, because of the wide ranging nature of the RDP philosophy, anything that has to do with reconstruction and development can be seen as contributing to the intentions of the RDP. Building a school on a farm for the children of the labourers, assisting with building housing for your workers, building a sports complex for the community, all of this is part of reconstruction and development. The same would apply in the area of education, formal, informal, adult literacy programmes - all of this can also be seen to be falling within the scope of the RDP. Helping to restructure and activate the economy, which is one of the key programmes of the RDP, is also a way of assisting in reconstruction and development. In fact, if a business has been doing all these kinds of things, or any part of them before, and has simply not called them RDP or its

contribution to the RDP, it can very usefully do so right now and thereby score brownie points in the eyes of the Government.

3. It is important to study how the bureaucracy for the RDP is going to be deployed. In terms of the White Paper as well as the original document there will be structures looking at deployment and implementation of the programmes of the RDP at the different tiers of government. In other words, central, regional as well as local. These RDP structures will then interact with line departments at these various levels to see to what extent RDP programmes are being developed. By line departments I mean for example, Departments of Housing, Education, Health etc. It would serve business well to find out who the actual flesh and blood people will be in a particular area or in a particular structure in which that business operates and then to find out to what extent there can be some synergy between the business and that particular project of the RDP.

4. It is important to realise that contributing to the RDP need not necessarily only be commercial, financial or tangible. It can be the transfer of information and knowledge as well and I have no doubt that on many levels of RDP project implementation there is going to be a great need for skilled, technical transfer of knowledge and that business can play a very important role in this regard as

well. Also, on a very practical level for example in assisting police community relations in a particular area, a firm that specialises in technical implements such as walkie talkies or radio communication or whatever can assist the police and the community to improve community policing and contribute to law and order and so on. In other words, what I am suggesting is don't limit the imagination in any way as to how you can be useful in terms of the RDP projects.

5. Finally, it is important to realise and this is clearly reflected in the White Paper as well as the original document, that the Government is keenly aware of the fact that it cannot itself be the driving force for the successful implementation of the RDP. It will have to look towards a partnership relationship with the private sector. And in this regard, the private sector can very easily define its own particular contribution in the programme or in the general framework of the RDP and say that this is how they are contributing to the process itself. There are many aspects of reconstruction and development where it is simply beyond the capability of government to do. My own view is of course, that if a business does efficient business and contributes to growth in the economy, this in itself can be seen as a contribution to the RDP. We cannot really expect more definite response from the private sector, until we have had a more concrete response

from the government itself as to what it sees the concrete projects that it wants to fund for RDP.

Jay Naidoo's eloquent articulation of RDP philosophy is typical of a Minister without Portfolio and without a line function. One would have to look at line function Ministers to find out to what extent Naidoo's philosophy can be translated into concrete proposals. Once that happens of course, it will be even easier for the private sector to determine how it can contribute.