

Conference to discuss impact of global economic crisis on labour law

Later this July, at the 26th Annual Labour Law Conference, South Africa's labour legislation, the economy and the National Development Plan (NDP) will serve as a backdrop for employment law experts and distinguished speakers to debate issues such as mining reform, industrial action, and job creation.



Jointly organised by the Universities of Cape Town, Witwatersrand and KwaZulu-Natal, the conference will take place from 30 July to 1 August 2013 at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg.

Addressing the challenge of the global economic crisis

Under the theme 'Employment, the economy & growth: The implications for labour law,' it will examine the impact of the protracted global economic crisis on labour law and the need for the South African economy and labour market to develop tools to address these challenges.

This is particularly critical in view of the official unemployment rate which continues to hover at the 25% mark. The NDP aims to reduce unemployment from the current levels to 6% by 2030 in order to eliminate poverty.

Says Professor Jeremy Seekings, director for the Centre for Social Science Research at the University of Cape Town: "The NDP hopes that most of the 11 million new jobs needed by 2030 will be created through a massive expansion of employment for less skilled workers in small and medium-sized businesses in labour-intensive sectors."

"But for all its talk about tough choices, it has little to say about how to shift the economy away from its current path of job destruction in precisely those sectors. No major reforms are proposed with respect to the institutions and procedures through which wages are set. As an example, the clothing sector illustrates the dark side of South Africa's labour market policies," he adds. Seekings will partake in one of the conference's panel debates alongside Rudi Dicks and a trade union representative.

Plenary discussions

Attorney Richard Spoor, whose focus on occupational health and safety has held major mining companies accountable for their treatment of workers, argues that the profits generated by the South African mining industry are illusory, because many of the costs associated with it are passed on to workers, neighbouring communities and the environment.

"If an economy or industry is to be maintained it must be sustainable. The mining industry is certainly not sustainable if the social and economic costs associated with its activities outweigh the benefits that accrue," he argues.

Spoor will participate in a plenary discussion which includes Dr Elize Strydom, senior executive of employment relations at the Chamber of Mines and Andrew Levy, a well-known teacher, writer, arbitrator, broadcaster and commentator on South African labour and employment concerns.

Other topics under debate this year include emerging trends in evidence at the CCMA, the management of senior executives and the role of the CCMA in mediating in the strike context. Professor Halton Cheadle, lawyer and labour activist, is lined up for another of the conference's plenary sessions.

High-profile presenters

The Annual Labour Law Conference provides the ideal opportunity for trade unions, government officials, HR managers, labour practitioners, lawyers and business leaders to keep abreast of latest trends and hot issues in the labour market and to participate in forums to resolve some of the current employment challenges.

Mr Justice Basheer Waglay, judge president of the Labour Appeal Court, will open the 26th Annual Labour Law Conference with an address on priorities for the labour court system, while the minister of labour, Mildred Oliphant, and Reserve Bank governor, Gill Marcus, are also expected to present addresses.

There will be 12 workshops and presenters include S'bu Gule, chairman of Norton Rose South Africa, whose focus is on employment, labour law and immigration; Craig Bosch, labour lawyer, mediator and arbitrator; Advocate Kathy Idensohn of the Department of Commercial Law at the University of Cape Town; Professor Avinash Govindjee of the Faculty of Law at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University; Aadil Patel, director and national head at commercial law firm, Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr; Shamima Gaibie, director at Cheadle Thompson & Haysom Inc and Benita Whitcher of the School of Law at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

For more information on the 26th Annual Labour Law Conference or to make a booking, go to www.lexisnexis.co.za. For more information on the LexisNexis Labour Relations website, go to www.lrmanagement.co.za.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>