

Nedlac urged to lead review of labour laws

Employment and Labour Minister Thulas Nxesi has called on Nedlac to lead a review on labour laws in order to cut red tape and administrative costs for small medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs).

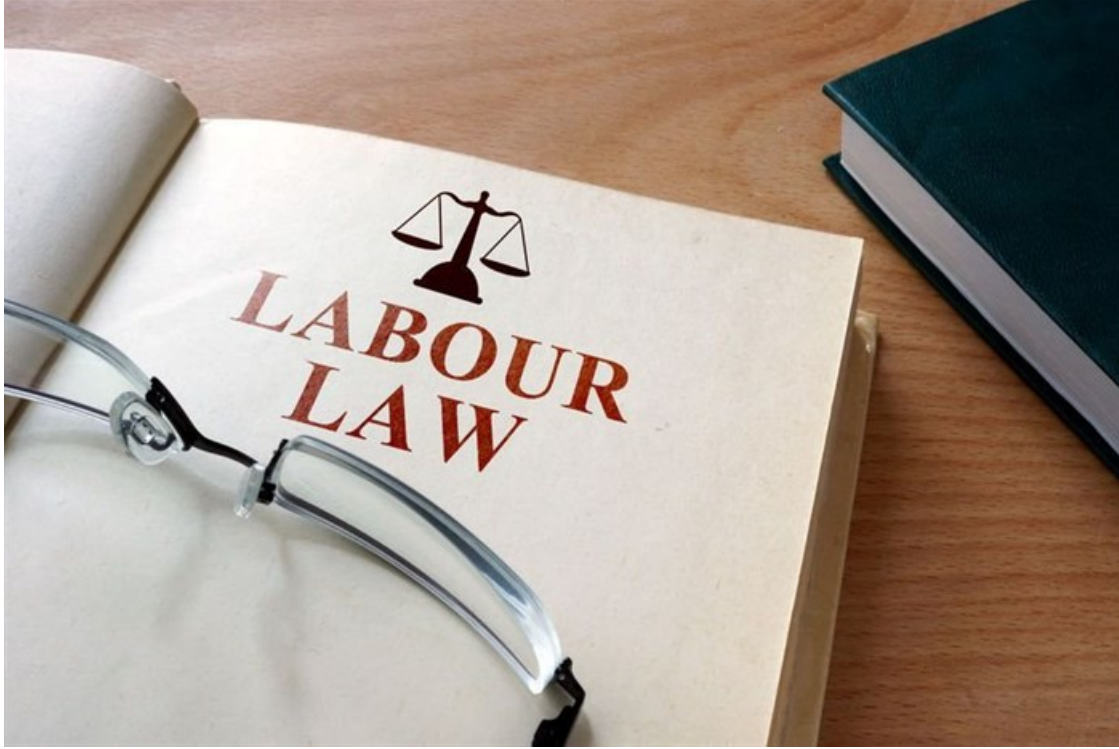


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Addressing the opening of the 26th Nedlac's Annual Summit under the theme: "Recovering and Building Together", the Minister said a general review was due.

"There are signs that the present collective bargaining system is taking strain – and needs to be strengthened," he said.

South Africa's major amendment to labour legislation happened in 2010 with a focus on the Labour Relations Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Employment Equity Act, and the Employment Services Act.

The amendments to the four labour laws focused on:

- Regulating labour brokers and atypical forms of employment;

- Facilitating unionisation in vulnerable sectors;
- Adding protection for vulnerable workers;
- Improving the functioning of labour market institutions, including the CCMA, bargaining and statutory councils;
- Addressing current problems in industrial disputes and dispute resolution;
- Streamlining enforcement and enhancing compliance;
- Promoting equity in the labour market.
- Providing a new legal framework for the operation of public and private employment services.

Minister Nxesi said in 2022 Nedlac would be called upon to tackle a number of additional priorities. These, he said, would include “plugging the holes in the social protection safety net and this would include a discussion about the very definition of what constitutes a ‘worker’ and an ‘employee’”.

He said another area of focus would be a conversation and analysis of the impact of technological change and the Fourth Industrial Revolution on the world of work and on society in general. He also challenged Nedlac to address issues of energy and sustainability.

Reflecting on the first year of the pandemic, during which the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell by over 7% and the country lost well over one million jobs, he said: “The pain continues – reflected in the most recent StatsSA unemployment figures – rising to 34.9%.”

He said amidst the shadow of the beginnings of the Fourth Wave – early signs show that the new Omicron variant was more infectious than the Delta variant.

“The pandemic placed a heavy responsibility, not only upon government, but also on the social partners and Nedlac. I believe that in such periods of economic, social and political crisis that the need for social dialogue and strong institutions such as Nedlac becomes very apparent,” Nxesi said.

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