



MINISTRY OF FINANCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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SPEECH BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE

GTAC PUBLIC ECONOMICS CONFERENCE 2024

5 SEPTEMBER 2024

Introduction and Acknowledgment

Distinguished guests, esteemed colleagues, and participants from across South Africa and beyond, it is an honour to deliver the closing remarks at the conclusion of this remarkable annual Public Economics Conference. Over the past three days, we have been privileged to engage in insightful discussions, witness groundbreaking presentations, and share valuable experiences that collectively aim to reshape the future of public service delivery in our nation.

I want to extend my deepest appreciation to all the speakers, panellists, and organisers who have made this conference a resounding success. Special thanks to the Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) for orchestrating this event, and to the numerous government departments, academic institutions, private sector leaders, and international representatives for their active participation. Your contributions have truly enriched this forum.

Reflecting on the Conference Themes

This year's conference has focused on the theme of "Technology and Data for Enhanced Government Service Delivery," a topic that is not only timely but also crucial for the continued growth and development of our country. We have explored the immense potential of digital transformation in the public sector, and how it can be harnessed to improve decision-making, optimize resource allocation, and ultimately enhance the quality of services provided to our citizens.

The sessions over the past three days have demonstrated the breadth and depth of opportunities that lie in digital technologies. From the use of AI by SARS to streamline debt recovery, to the National Treasury's Local Government Database and Reporting System acting as an early warning system for municipalities, we have seen how innovation can drive efficiency and effectiveness in public administration.



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The Importance of Inclusivity and Collaboration

One of the key takeaways from this conference is the importance of inclusivity and collaboration. The diverse representation here—spanning all nine provinces, numerous sectors, and even international borders—highlights the collective effort required to drive digital transformation. Whether through government initiatives, academic research, or private sector innovation, we must work together to ensure that the benefits of digital transformation are realized by all South Africans.

The discussions on digital inclusion, particularly, have underscored the need to address the digital divide that still exists in our society. As we embrace new technologies, we must ensure that they do not exacerbate existing inequalities but rather serve as tools for empowerment and equal opportunity.

Strategic Insights and Future Directions

This conference has also provided us with critical insights into the challenges and complexities associated with digital transformation. The discussions on data interoperability, digital skills, and security issues have highlighted areas where further attention is needed. As we move forward, it will be essential to develop strategies that are not only innovative but also resilient and secure, ensuring that our digital infrastructure can support the growing demands of our public services.

Looking ahead, the knowledge shared here will be instrumental in shaping the policies and strategies that guide our nation's digital transformation journey. The examples from other countries, such as Estonia's comprehensive approach to digitization, offer valuable lessons that we can adapt to our unique context.

Conclusion and Call to Action

In closing, I would like to emphasize that the conversations and ideas generated during this conference must not end here. The work we do from this point forward will determine the impact of our efforts. I urge all of you to take the insights gained here back to your respective institutions and continue to advocate for and implement the changes needed to achieve a digitally inclusive and efficient public sector.



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Together, we have the power to transform our government services and, by extension, the lives of millions of South Africans. Let us commit to this vision with the determination and collaboration that has characterized this conference.

Thank you once again for your participation and engagement. I look forward to seeing the tangible outcomes of our collective efforts in the months and years to come.

Safe travels to those returning home, and for our virtual participants, thank you for your unwavering commitment from afar. Let us continue this journey of transformation together.

Thank you.