



FW de Klerk
FOUNDATION

FW DE KLERK FOUNDATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON “ADDRESSING INEQUALITY”

The FW de Klerk Foundation will dedicate its 2019 Annual Conference on Friday, 1 February, to one of the most critical challenges confronting the nation, inequality. Election years, with their promises and platitudes, have not addressed this grave issue. The Foundation will reflect on this matter but also go further and ask the vital question, “What is to be done?”

Inequality in South Africa is stubbornly high and has over the last 24 years grown increasingly persistent. A 2018 World Bank report aptly sums up the triple challenge confronting the country including, “high poverty, high inequality and high unemployment”. While there is no quick fix to these challenges, the fact of the matter is that if we as a country do not address this deep-rooted problem effectively, we will not be a peaceful, prosperous and harmonious society. In addition, striving for equality is one of the basic mandates of our Constitution.

The Conference will focus on two aspects of inequality that - in our view - are the most apparent and the most important: economic inequality and educational inequality. We have prepared a fact-sheet on inequality that will be made available to all conference attendees. This will illustrate the stark reality of the past and the present. The various speakers will therefore concentrate on what could be done to address inequality in concrete ways.

Former President FW de Klerk will give the keynote address and set the scene, as it were. Thereafter, two well-known economists will give their views on what could be done in addressing economic inequality: Prof Haroon Borat (University of Cape Town), and Dr Roelof Botha (GIBS). Their inputs will be followed by an hour-long interactive panel discussion, where the audience will have the opportunity to pose questions.

The second part of the Conference will be introduced by Ms Penelope Vinjevold (Deputy Director-General of the Eastern Cape Department of Education). She will specifically focus on educational inequality and what could be done at school level to improve it. A panel discussion with Ms Vinjevold and former President De Klerk will conclude the proceedings.

We believe that a persistent focus on addressing inequality should include improving our educational outcomes at all levels of the system. In this way, young South Africans would be better skilled to enter the job market and face the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In conjunction, economic inequality can only be addressed effectively by giving people the opportunity to work, whether in a job or in their own business. More emphasis should be placed on these important aspects.

Our speakers will no doubt provide rich detail and analysis of the issues outlined above. This, especially in respect of how to kickstart growth; address the country’s dubious reputation as one of the most under-educated and under-skilled populations in the middle-income range of countries; and generating jobs in sectors like agriculture and manufacturing, amongst others. A prerequisite for the above is of course the necessity for policy certainty. This critical foundational issue will be important during the course of the day.



FW de Klerk
FOUNDATION

Hopefully the outcomes of this Conference will lead political parties to put the cardinal issue of addressing inequality *in an effective way* high on their election agendas.

Issued by the FW de Klerk Foundation
31 January 2019