



competition commission
south africa

Media Statement

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COMPETITION CONFERENCE CALLS FOR MORE SUPPORT FOR REGULATORY MEASURES

The resounding message from competition authorities emanating from the 17th Annual Competition Law, Economics, and Policy Conference held on 28 and 29 September 2023 was the need to support regulatory measures to tackle the prevailing concentration challenges in South Africa's economy.

Closing off the two-day conference held at the Canvas Riversands Conference Centre in Fourways, Johannesburg on Friday, Competition Commission Deputy Commissioner Hardin Ratshisusu emphasised the role competition authorities must play in shaping a fair and competitive economic landscape and told some 447 delegates that addressing issues related to market concentration is not just a matter of economic policy, but a fundamental prerequisite for fostering innovation, ensuring fair competition, and safeguarding the interest of consumers and businesses alike.

Over the course of the two-day conference co-hosted by the Commission and the Competition Tribunal, delegates, including DTIC Minister Ebrahim Patel, gathered with a focus on **“Towards Competitive Markets, Transformation and Deconcentration”** and engaged in meaningful discussions and collaborations aimed at advancing the transformation and deconcentration of competitive markets in South Africa.

The conference, opened by Commissioner Doris Tshepe, emphasised the critical need for fostering competitive markets that benefit all participants and addressed the persistence of high concentration levels in the economy. On day one, Commissioner Tshepe highlighted the ongoing challenge of high concentration levels within South Africa's economy, despite the diligent efforts of the Commission and the Competition Act. She underlined the primary objective of the conference as engaging stakeholders from diverse sectors, including business, government, labour, lawyers, and economists, to strategise methods for promoting competitive markets. Particular emphasis was placed on fostering participation, especially from Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) and firms controlled by historically disadvantaged persons (HDPs).

Key discussions during the conference encompassed a wide range of vital topics, including food inflation's impact on low-income consumers, strategies to address rising inflation, and the adoption of a competition

protocol by African governments to facilitate cross-border trade while ensuring competitiveness. Day two of the conference featured insights from judicial adjudicators, including Competition Tribunal Chairperson Mondo Mazwai and Competition Appeals Court Judge Norman Manoim, who provided valuable feedback on the work of the competition authority.

In her keynote address on day two, Chairperson Mazwai delved into competition law and its crucial role in promoting inclusive markets and public interest in merger assessments. She cautioned that the journey towards fostering competitive and inclusive markets in South Africa may not yield immediate economic transformation or substantial SMME and HDP involvement. Nevertheless, she stressed that the persistent efforts of competition authorities, albeit gradual, play a vital role in shaping progress. By embracing a context-aware, transformative approach consistent with the Act's framework, Mondo said competition authorities can make meaningful contributions to South Africa's transformation objectives, one case at a time.

In addition to these discussions, day two of the conference placed a spotlight on two critical sectors: energy and the national health insurance (NHI). Panellists discussed how the energy sector faces challenges related to the country's ongoing energy crisis and the need to foster inclusive growth within the sector encompassing equitable pricing considerations for renewable energy components such as inverters and solar panels. Ultimately, panellists agreed to the need to ensure competitive markets that benefit all South Africans.

Summarising the discussions of the conference, Commissioner Tshepe emphasised the importance of inclusive growth and highlighted the tools at the Commission's disposal, including market inquiries, to address concentration levels and remove barriers to entry. She cited the ongoing market inquiry into the fresh produce market as an example of efforts to promote competitiveness and inclusivity in the economy. "The Commission remains committed to its mission of creating competitive markets that work for the benefit of all stakeholders," said Commissioner Tshepe.

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