

Bonang Mohale to speak on business supporting democracy at Trialogue Conference

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The important role that business plays in supporting accountable political actors who embed and deepen South Africa's democracy will take centre stage at this year's [Trialogue Business in Society Conference](#) as thought leaders and delegates from the private, public and non-profit sectors gather to discuss corporate social responsibility ahead of elections.



University of the Free State Chancellor Bonang Mohale

In his opening keynote address, businessman, author and University of the Free State Chancellor Bonang Mohale will outline some of the remedies to the country's entrenched corruption and how business could play a positive role in addressing the problem.

"Thirty years into democracy, poverty still has primarily a black and feminine face," says Mohale. "More than ever, business must insist on real transformation, ethical leadership, good governance, meaningful service delivery that benefits many and effective law and order, safety and security."

One of South Africa's most successful businessmen, Mohale is known as much for his active role in seeking to advance his country's interests as he is for the role he has played in creating successful companies. Joining other thought leaders, Mohale will explore the role business plays in society and why this role must be built on a foundation of ethical business leadership.

According to Mohale, leadership in South Africa is in a critical state, characterised by pervasive crises of lawlessness and social malaise that hampers economic growth, stifles innovation and corrodes institutional trust. His address will consider the private sector's role in rejuvenating leadership and spearheading the rebuilding of an ethical foundation for effective governance.

Corporate social investment and the involvement of the non-profit

sector has a valuable role to play in demonstrating these values and nurturing leadership development.

With national elections imminent, Mohale reflects on the role of companies in supporting democracy and ensuring that elected representatives are held accountable for serving the public interest. "We as business must do everything in our power to educate our own employees on the importance of voting, of being part of a participatory democracy and then, between elections, holding those who get elected to high public office to account. People in parliament and in government must know that the electorate, not just their party is the final arbiter and are demanding better performance," says Mohale.

He calls for action and participation from all sectors of society. "Politics has an overwhelming impact on how the rest of us go about our daily business, whether we are private individuals, entrepreneurs or corporates. Now is the time that we all do what is needed to get this country moving again," Mohale says.

Also at the conference, Narnia Bohler-Muller of the Human Sciences Research Council will discuss democracy and social justice, while Dr Imtiaaz Sooliman, Gift of the Givers will discuss the role of companies in healing the social fabric. Overall

conference themes include transforming education, entrepreneurship to catalyse growth, driving transformation in agri-ecosystems and building skills for employment creation.

Dialogue director Cathy Duff adds her perspective on the conference's significance, especially in light of the upcoming elections. "We stand at a critical juncture and the voices of thought leaders need to be heard as we engage in discussions around business's role in society. The topics we're tackling — from democracy and social justice to education, entrepreneurship and jobs — resonate deeply with the priorities outlined in the manifestos of South Africa's political parties. It's a moment for business and civil society to come together and articulate the roles we can play in driving meaningful change. Engagement and collaboration between the private sector, civil society, and political actors is crucial as we strive for a more equitable, just, and prosperous South Africa."

The Dialogue Business in Society Conference 2024 takes place on 14 and 15 May in Johannesburg and online, themed 'Connect, Collaborate, Change'. Bonang Mohale's session will run on Tuesday 14 May at 8.45am.

For more information or to register, please go to <https://dialogue.co.za/dialogue-business-in-society-conference-2024/>.

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