Agri SA

Mediaverklaring / Media Release

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31 Maart/March 2017

Agri SA sê politieke leierskap beduiwel die ekonomie

Die kabinetskommeling, soos gisteraand aangekondig, gaan nie net oor individue nie, maar meer oor die onderliggende boodskap wat uitgestuur word, veral ten opsigte van die ekonomie, sê Johannes Möller, President van Agri SA. “Ons beskou hierdie stap wat mnr Zuma geneem het as ‘n miskenning van die ekonomie, onkundigheid ten opsigte van beleggervertroue en onverskilligheid oor die toekomstige besluite van die graderingsagentskappe”. “Ons het beslis geen verdere onstuimigheid en onsekerheid nodig nie, ook nie wat die wisselkoers betref nie.”

"Suid-Afrika volg blykbaar tans ‘n ***beggar thy neighbour-***beleid, d.w.s ‘n beleid wat tradisioneel beskryf word as een waar ‘n land sekere beleidsmaatreëls aanvaar het wat nadelig vir ander lande kan wees,” sê hy. Dit is tans duidelik ‘n irrelevante verwagting, veral indien die lae vlak van regstreekse buitelandse investering (FDI) in Suid-Afrika as barometer dien. “Volgens die jongste *World Investment Report*, het FDI in Suid-Afrika afgeneem met bykans 70% in 2015 in vergeleke met die vorige jaar – die laagste vlak in 10 jaar. “Duidelik is buitelanders nie bereid om plaaslike beleid goedsmoeds so te aanvaar nie.

"Op die oog af, maak dit baie min sin dat president Zuma Minister Gordhan beveel het om vergaderings met beleggers in London en New York te kanselleer en huis toe te kom. Watter boodskap stuur dit uit oor die vlak van vertroue wat ons het in ons huidige senior verteenwoordigers en selfs, soos gisteraand aangekondig, hul opvolgers? Sekerlik sal sodanige stappe aanleiding gee tot ‘n verdere skerp afname in die broodnodige FDI, sê Möller. "Heroorweging van beleidsformulering en politieke optrede is duidelik nou van uiterste belang sodat ons land nie ‘n “mislukte staat” word nie”. Hy voeg by dat die feit dat 17 miljoen mense tans afhanklik is van staatstoelae – mense wat kon aansluit by die werkende en entrepreneurs-kaders van die ekonomie – dien as bewys dat dringende aksie nou nodig is in hierdie verband.

"Hoewel die landboubeleidsomgewing nie direk geraak word deur die kabinetskommeling nie, is dit net so onseker, indien nie erger nie.” Politieke uitsprake oor onteiening sonder vergoeding, onpraktiese voorstelle oor inkorting van grondbesit, die grondrestitusie-proses wat tans vloeibaar is, die onsekere toestand van toekomstige beskikbaarheid van water en vae eise vir swart ekonomiese bemagtiging wat gehoor aan gegee moet word, is beslis nie bevorderlik vir belegging in ons sektor nie – dit terwyl optimum produksie op ‘n lewensvatbare kommersiële grondslag vereis word om die toekomstige vraag na voedsel vir die hoofsaaklik verstedelike bevolking in die land te verseker”. “Ons glo dat ons as ‘n organisasie die regering voorsien het van werkbare oplossings met betrekking tot grondhervorming en gepaste finansieringsmeganismes in die verband. “Hoekom daar tot dusver basies geen reaksie hierop was nie is onduidelik – miskien weens ‘n sekere vlak van wantroue wat aangespreek moet word, in die mate dat dit wel bestaan”.

Volgens Möller is die sporadiese oproepe vir wysigings aan die Grondwet ‘n uiters kommerwekkende aspek van die openbare debat. “Indien ons daardie roete volg, sal selfs die baie beperkte beleidsekerheid wat wel bestaan ook verdwyn. Ons het beslis meer beleidsekerheid nodig – nie minder nie.”

Möller sê dit mag nodig wees vir sosiale vennote, d.w.s die regering, besigheid en arbeid, om die Nasionale Ontwikkelingsplan (NOP) op ‘n openlike en eerlike wyse te herbesoek, aangesien die verskeidenheid van prysenswaardige en werkbare voorstelle in die NOP besig is om te vervaag. Hy haal soos volg aan uit die NOP:

"South Africa has the means, the goodwill, the people and the resources to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. But it will not happen unless we write this new story, a story of people, their relationships, their dreams and their hopes for a better tomorrow".

Uitgereik deur Agri SA, Direktoraat: Korporatiewe Skakeling

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Agri SA says, political leadership blatantly bedevils the economy

The cabinet reshuffle last night is not only about individuals, but more about the underlying message being conveyed especially in relation to the economy, says Johannes Möller, President of Agri SA. “We perceive this step by Mr Zuma as one of disregard to the economy, ignorance with respect to investor confidence and carelessness about the future actions of rating agencies”. “Further turbulence and uncertainty also with respect to the exchange rate is certainly uncalled for”.

"South Africa seems to be currently following a **beggar thy neighbour policy,** a policy traditionally described as one whereby a country adopts certain policy measures that can be detrimental to other countries" he said. He added that this is currently clearly an irrelevant expectation especially if the low level of foreign direct investment (FDI) into South Africa is taken as a barometer. "According to the latest World Investment Report, FDI into South Africa decreased by almost 70% in 2015 compared to the previous year; the lowest level in 10 years. "Clearly foreigners are not prepared to accept local policies just willy-nilly.

"On the face of it, it thus made little if any sense for president Zuma having ordered minister Gordhan to cancel meetings with investors in London and New York and to return home. What message does this convey about the level of trust to be placed in our current senior country representatives and even, as was announced last night, their successors. Surely such ill-considered steps can lead to the country being further starved of desperately needed FDI", Moller said. "Clearly a rethink of policy formulation and political conduct are now of paramount importance if our country is not truly to become a failed state". He added that the fact that 17 million people currently rely on state grants - people that could have been part of the employed and entrepreneurial cadres of the economy - testifies to the urgency that is required in this regard.

"Although not directly affected by the cabinet reshuffling, the agricultural policy environment is equally uncertain if not in a worse state". Political utterances regarding expropriation without compensation, impractical proposals on curbing the size of landholdings, the restitution of land process being in a state of flux, the uncertain state of future water availability and unclear demands with respect to black economic empowerment to be adhered to are most certainly not conducive to investment also in our sector, this whilst optimum production on a commercially viable basis is required to meet future food demand especially for the largely urbanized population in the country". "We believe that we as an organization has presented government with workable solutions with respect to land reform imperatives and non-disruptive financing in this regard. "Why basically no response was forthcoming is unclear, maybe due to some level of distrust, which should be addressed in the interest of the country, to the extent that it does exist".

Moller said an extremely disturbing feature of the public debate is the sporadic calls for the Constitution to be changed. "If we were to go this route, the little policy certainty that still exists will also dissipate. We most certainly need more policy certainty, not less".

Moller said that it might be necessary for social partners i.e. government, business and labour to revisit the National Development Plan (NDP) in an open, frank and honest way as the many laudable and workable proposals in the NDP are now fading away into history. He quoted from the NDP: "South Africa has the means, the goodwill, the people and the resources to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. But it will not happen unless we write this new story, a story of people, their relationships, their dreams and their hopes for a better tomorrow".

Issued by Agri SA, Directorate: Corporate Liaison

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