

No-show Molefe sidesteps difficult questions at #AUW2017

 By Nicci Botha

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Brian Molefe, [Eskom's reinstated CEO](#), was a no-show to deliver the keynote address at [African Utility Week](#). This is hardly surprising, given his track record of not pitching at this particular event when there's a bullet to be dodged.



Dr Ben Ngubane, Eskom chairman. Source: Miningmx

Two years ago, when he was newly appointed to Eskom and the country was in the throes of loadshedding, he did the same thing. Admittedly, loadshedding became a thing of the past on his watch, but it pales into insignificance to the [State Capture revelations about him](#), and now the controversy surrounding his [R30.1m pension pay-out claim from the parastatal](#).

Blander than vanilla

Instead, his replacement, Dr Ben Ngubane, Eskom board chair delivered a blander than vanilla speech. The [failed nuclear deal](#) and [Eskom's back-peddling on signing renewable power purchase agreements](#) did not even appear to exist in Ngubane's reality.

Ngubane had to field questions at an impromptu media briefing on the side-lines of the conference on Molefe's absence. When asked whether Molefe may possibly be embarrassed given the backlash over the board's decision to reinstate him, Ngubane dismissed it jokingly.

“Molefe was going to be here, but was called to parliament. No, no, Molefe embarrassed? He can feel hurt about things yes, but definitely not scared for meeting,” he said. However, according to *EWN* there is no indication that Molefe was at Parliament.

On his reinstatement he said: “It is going to be for the good. He is going to carry on where he stopped - making electricity affordable for our people.”

Ngubane explained Eskom’s objective is still to lower the cost of electricity in the country by paying back the government guarantees and creating significant cost savings.

Coercing ministers and calls to dissolve Eskom's board

He also rubbished claims by the former mineral resources minister, Ngoako Ramathodi that he and Molefe pressurised a minister to help the Guptas take over the Glencore coal mine.

“My office told me the minister claims that we forced him – he claims something that is impossible. We cannot tell a minister what to do, we take orders from ministers. We ask for help,” Ngubane said. “For a minister to now claim that we actually made him take a decision about something is preposterous.”

Ngubane also shrugged off calls by the ANC for the Eskom board to be dissolved. He made it clear the board serves at the behest of those who appoint it.

“That is an opinion. We are here to serve at government’s pleasure. We made a difference. I am proud of the difference we made. We saved the country from blackouts.”

Ngubane in his formal address told delegates this an opportune time to invest in the region in ways that ensure mutual benefits. He said that the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution of digitisation and disruption had the potential for Africa to discover its own solutions.

The role of governments and other stakeholders is to improve the lives of Africans, he said. “Reliable energy supply must be used to leverage economic growth and sustainable development. As the former secretary of the UN, Ban Ki-moon said, ‘energy is the golden thread that connects economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability’.”

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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