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GOVERNANCE CONCERNS DEEPEN AS MERSETA REMAINS WITHOUT AN ACCOUNTING AUTHORITY.

Johannesburg, *16 July 2025* — The plastics manufacturing industry expresses deep concern over the continued absence of a duly appointed Accounting Authority at the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (merSETA), which raises serious questions around governance, accountability, and ethical leadership within the post-school education and training system.

The term of the previous merSETA board expired in March 2025. Since then, despite the reopening of the nominations process in May 2025, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has not demonstrated a visible commitment to finalising the appointment of a new Accounting Authority. This prolonged leadership vacuum is undermining confidence in the integrity and credibility of one of the country's most significant and most strategically essential SETAs.

In a deviation from established governance principles, DHET has instructed the SETA Chief Executive Officers to act as governance structures in the interim. This presents an apparent conflict of roles and accountability, as executives are now expected to both implement and oversee decisions, compromising the checks and balances essential to good governance.

At the merSETA, this situation is even more problematic. The CEO position is currently held in an acting capacity due to unresolved internal governance issues. This means that the SETA is now operating without both an Accounting Authority and a permanent executive head, creating a leadership vacuum that threatens the integrity of decision-making and fiduciary oversight.

The plastics sector, alongside other manufacturing industries, relies on merSETA to implement skills development programmes in an ethical, transparent, and accountable manner. The current arrangement, however, raises serious concerns regarding ethical leadership, governance compliance, and public trust.

The plastics industry calls on DHET to urgently prioritise the appointment of a competent, representative, and independent Accounting Authority at the merSETA. This is essential to restore governance stability, reinforce public accountability, and uphold the principles of ethical leadership required by the Skills Development Act and King IV governance standards.

Skills development is a national imperative. It must be stewarded by governance structures that are fully functional, transparent, and capable of making decisions in the public interest.

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