

**FEATURE: Matsi Modise, Managing Director: SiMODiSA****13 August 2015**

SiMODiSA, an industry-led initiative to remove obstacles faced by start-ups and SMEs, has appointed a full-time managing director, Matsi Modise. SAVCA spoke to Matsi about her new role, and about SiMODiSA's mandate and plans for the coming years.

***SAVCA: Matsi, congratulations on the appointment. What are your main deliverables and objectives for the coming two years?***

MM: SiMODiSA is an industry association whose mandate is to promote, catalyse and amplify high growth, high impact entrepreneurship in South Africa. Our country has the key ingredients to make for a compelling global success story of a thriving entrepreneurship ecosystem, but the space is not connected, hence the low levels of total early-stage entrepreneurship activity (TEA). SiMODiSA is here to connect the dots.

***SAVCA: One of your first achievements has been the publication by SiMODiSA of research and policy prescriptions, entitled "Accelerating growth of small and medium enterprises in South Africa: Policy recommendations for enhancing the start-up/ SME ecosystem in South Africa. What are the key findings and prescriptions contained in this document?***

MM: Indeed, the position paper is a first of many stakeholder engagements and research insights that SiMODiSA will curate, through a consultative process with the South African entrepreneurship ecosystem that includes the government. Some key findings highlight the need for our government to look at alternative and accessible risk funding vehicles for SMEs, such as venture capital (VC). Also, the paper recommends a look at exchange control regulation to enable more business development for international expansion. Other considerations in the paper include a look at conducive labour reforms and South African business visas.

***SAVCA: What role will SiMODiSA play in ensuring that some of the main issues identified are addressed?***

MM: Because we currently exist in an ecosystem that is segregated by nature, SiMODiSA has convening power amongst key stakeholders that need to engage and address such critical matters.

***SAVCA: What response have you had thus far from policymakers whose work shape SMEs and start-ups in South Africa? Is there political will and understanding of the main imperatives?***

MM: The sense we get is that the government does want to create jobs, reduce poverty and inequality. This is clearly stated in the National Development Plan, so there is political will. What is questionable at this point is the ability for the government to deliver upon such a necessary high ambition. We feel that there is a deficit in skills, experience and the leadership that will drive the strategy towards creating a conducive and enabling entrepreneurship culture in South Africa. The onus is on us to contribute what we can to ensure that we help the government achieve on its ambitions. We need to do it for the country, the continent and the globe. The world is waiting!

[SiMODiSA: Accelerating growth of small and medium enterprises in South Africa: Policy recommendations for enhancing the start-up / SME ecosystem in South Africa](#)