

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MS NKAKARENG RAKGOALE ON BEHALF OF THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, MR. CHUPU MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES HELD AT NSOVO DISABILITY CENTRE, COLLINS CHABANE MUNICIPLAITY.

03 December 2019

Programme Director;
Our host leader, Hosi Patrick Mavambe;
Mayor for Collins Chabane Local Municipality, Cllr Moses Maluleke;
Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality, Cllr Dowelani Nengunda;
Our Councilors present here today;
Organisations representing people living with disabilities;
Representatives of the Limpopo Gambling Board;
Ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much for your wonderful response to celebrate this important day with us.

Before I can go any further with my message of the day, I want to take this opportunity to add my condolences to the Ramabulana family on the loss of their daughter, Precious Ramabulana. We cannot even begin to express our anger about what happened to our precious daughter.

The cruelty with which she was killed brings a pain that is unbearable. We hope that the family will be comforted by the commitment of the police in bringing the perpetrator to justice.

As government, our call is that anyone who is convicted of offences of this nature should not get anything less than life imprisonment. He must never come back.

Allow me to take this opportunity to once again condemn all cases of violence against women and children. We are currently observing the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children. Yet, we are made aware of almost weekly cases of such violent attacks. We are saying "Enough is Enough!" A very strong stance will be taken to root out this evil and the perpetrators thereof will not get off lightly. We commend President Cyril Ramaphosa for hearing our cries and making Gender Based Violence a so-called priority crime; ensuring that more resources are directed towards fighting this scourge.

Programme Director;

Today, however, is a very big day on our national calendar –It is also a very big

day on the international calendar. We have honoured this special day because we know that persons with disabilities continue to experience untold suffering as a result of victimization, exclusion, stigma and stereotypes.

Today we have come here to join you in saying that “nothing about us without us”.

This year’s edition of the International Day for Persons with Disability is being celebrated under the theme:

“Together building a South Africa inclusive of disability rights”.

This theme tells us that we cannot celebrate our freedoms and democracy if persons with disabilities remain excluded and marginalized. We can only be truly free once we all respect the rights and the dignity of all our citizens.

This theme also focuses on empowering persons with disabilities for an inclusive, equitable and sustainable development as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda pledges to “leave no one behind”. It is therefore our considered view that all our people should benefit from our processes of transformation and at the same time lead such processes.

Indeed our work is not complete for as long as there are barriers that still prohibit persons with disabilities to realise opportunities that can better their lives. Our task is to ensure that the doors to an inclusive society are wide open for our compatriots.

Programme Director;

We also use this day to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. Everything we do on this day, and throughout the year, is done in the spirit of ‘nothing about us without us’. Our government believes that people are their own liberators.

As government, we will therefore work with the Disability sector to identify key areas in which we should fulfill our obligations towards the rights of Persons with Disabilities. This represents our commitment to working with the relevant stakeholders and fighting against discrimination; thereby ensuring that equal opportunities are presented in all spheres and that they are represented on all matters affecting them.

We are, in this regard, encouraged by the President for having appointed persons with disabilities in his cabinet. However, there is much to be done and we all need to emulate this step.

We are further proud that our government has put in place sufficient legislative

and institutional mechanisms to promote and advance the rights and interests of persons with disabilities. Part of the legislative framework that our government has put in place includes the Employment Equity Act, the Prevention of Unfair or Unjust Discrimination Act and Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment.

The implementation of the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, requires annual reporting on the progress made on various interventions to advance the rights of persons with disabilities and we believe we are on the right track. This White Paper is intended to accelerate transformation and redress with regard to full inclusion, integration and equality for persons with disabilities. The White Paper and its Implementation Matrix offer various sectors of society a tangible platform to do things differently to expedite the process of improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities and their families.

Today as we speak, the enrolment of learners with disabilities in our ordinary public schools has reached over one hundred and twenty one thousand (121 000) from a mere seventy seven thousand (77 000) in the year 2002. Enrolment in special schools has also increased from sixty four thousand (64 000) in 2002, to almost one hundred and twenty thousand (120 000).

NSFAS has allocated over seventy six million rand (R76 million) towards reasonable accommodation support for tertiary students with disabilities.

Further to this, the Human Rights Commission has also been established with the eye on promoting respect for, observance of and protection of human rights for everyone without fear or favour; this includes the protection and advancement of the rights of the persons with disabilities.

Programme Director;

Today also marks the end of Disability Month, which saw a lot of activities, dialogues and discussions to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. The Department of Social Development as the custodians of Persons with Disabilities, have made great strides in the implementation of disability mainstreaming, based on the White Paper and the JICA or Japanese International Cooperation Agency project, is one such example. We are also linking awareness of Gender Based Violence, when we talk of rights of persons with disabilities; keeping in mind that they too fall victim to this scourge we are experiencing currently and that they too can help us root out this evil in our communities.

Some of the highlights of this month surely are the Disability Dialogues and the Disability Fun Day, which was held on separate occasions in Polokwane. Once again, we provided persons with disabilities the platform to showcase their talents; have fun; be active and healthy as well as discuss issues affecting them. We hope that these two days contributed meaningfully to our brothers and sisters with disabilities!

Programme Director;

In conclusion, allow me to say that we have defiantly covered a lot of ground since 1994, but we admit that there is a lot that can and must still be done. I also wish to take this opportunity to call on the unity of all persons with disabilities. You have won many battles but there are still many battles ahead. Through unity, you will achieve so much more.

This is how our people were able to defeat the evil system of apartheid. The liberation movement started by uniting all the oppressed people across gender and tribal lines. Once our people were united, it became much easier to confront and finally defeat apartheid.

We expect the same levels of unity amongst yourselves. It should not matter if someone is in a wheelchair or whether someone uses a walking cane –what matters is that you are all members of the disability community and that you are worthy and contributive members of society. If we work together, we can break barriers and open doors for an inclusive, caring society and development for all.

I thank you!