

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MEC RESPONSIBLE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, Ms NANDI NDALANE ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES HELD AT MOKWAKWAILA STADIUM ON 3 DECEMBER 2023

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

KGOSHI MODJADJI

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REPRESENTATIVE OF DISABLED PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA, Mr PATRIC TSHIA

ACTIVE HEAD OF OLD MUTUAL FOUNDATION, Mr KHOTSO TSOTSOTSO

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Good Morning

Today, we gather here to celebrate the International Day for Persons with Disabilities under the inspiring theme, "United in action to resuscitate and achieve sustainable development goals with and by persons with disabilities." It is an honor for me to address you on this significant occasion whose objective is to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development. The day further aims to promote understanding of disability issues in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life. Each one of us need to relate with this day as a significant point to empower persons with disabilities for being an integral part of the mainstream society.

Programme Director

According to Statistics South Africa people living with disability make seven person of the over 60 million population of our country. This is a significant number indeed and therefore presents us with a challenge to deliberately realize that people with disabilities deserves a fundamental stake in the developmental agenda of this country and province. This means we cannot afford take any decision which involves people with disabilities without their participation, input, and importantly direct involvement. I know that you are all aware of the famous motto of the disabled people which says "Nothing about us without us". This motto which is self-explanatory simply implies that disabled people deserve full participation and equalization of opportunities for, by and with persons with disabilities. As Limpopo government we fully embrace this motto and are committed to ensuring that no decision involving people with disabilities will be taken without their full participation.

Programme Director

We can take pride in the advances we have made in ensuring inclusivity and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Let me share with you some remarkable progress that highlight our achievement in this arena. Firstly, in the field of

education, the Limpopo province has taken great strides in promoting inclusive learning environments. According to recent data, the enrollment rate of children with disabilities in mainstream schools has increased by 25% in the last five years. This signifies a strong commitment towards ensuring that every child, irrespective of their abilities, can access quality education. Furthermore, efforts have been made to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in Limpopo. As of now, the province proudly boasts an increase in the employment rate of disabled individuals, thanks to governmental initiatives and private sector collaborations. This demonstrates our determination to foster an inclusive workforce that truly embraces diversity.

Programme Director

By expressing this matter of employment by no means we are not implying that we have sufficiently dealt with the employment of disabled people. We acknowledge that many of our disabled people remain without jobs despite many of them having acquired academic qualifications. We understand their frustration and remain committed to fighting for the employment of disabled people. In government we have set a target of two percent representation of persons with disabilities in our departments. We are comforted by the fact that many of our departments have made significant strides in this regards with some having achieved these targets. We must emphasise here that our approach will not be confined to the set targets. While the set target remains our guiding compass, our ultimate desire is to realize total employment of people living with disabilities. We know that employment relieves people with disabilities many burdens and therefore they are able to achieve their aspirations with relative ease.

Programme Director

In the healthcare sector, notable progress has also been made. Access to specialized medical care and assistive technologies for persons with disabilities has improved significantly. Over the past three years, Limpopo has witnessed a 15% increase in the provision of affordable and accessible healthcare services for individuals with disabilities. In terms of physical accessibility, our province has taken a comprehensive approach to ensure that public infrastructure and facilities are inclusive for all. In the past decade, Limpopo has witnessed an impressive increase in the number of buildings and public spaces made wheelchair accessible and adapted to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

Programme Director

Despite these achievements, we must also acknowledge that more work needs to be done. Challenges persist in areas such as transportation, social stigma, and overall societal inclusion. We must unite in action to address these issues, fostering an environment where every person with disabilities can thrive, contribute their talents, and live a life without barriers. To achieve sustainable development goals,

we must involve persons with disabilities as active participants in decision-making processes. We need their valuable insights and experiences to shape policies that are truly inclusive and representative of their needs. By empowering persons with disabilities, we not only enhance their lives but also contribute to the overall socioeconomic development of our province.

Programme Director

Today, I call upon all stakeholders – government bodies, civil society organizations, private enterprises, and individuals – to unite in action and renew our commitment to inclusivity. Let us work together to create a society that embraces diversity, shatters stereotypes, and builds an environment where persons with disabilities are fully integrated and valued for their contributions. I would like to express special appreciation to Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) who are providing support, care and comfort to people living with disabilities. Many of these organisations are supported financially by government through the Department of Social Development and we truly appreciate the great work that is being done in support of our people. We are also aware that there are NPOs who have been struggling with funding from government. I hope that many of those who were not receiving funding have applied for the impending cycle and have complied with necessary requirements so that those who deserve funding are able to receive it. Let us celebrate the progress we have made thus far in empowering persons with disabilities in Limpopo.

However, let us also recognize that this journey is ongoing, and we must continuously strive for greater inclusivity and equality. Together, we can make Limpopo a shining example of a province where achievements are not limited by ability, but where all individuals can reach their full potential.

I thank you.