

**Head of Department Social Development, Mr Mahlalela**

**Chief Directors and Senior Managers**

**People living with Disabilities**

**Sector Departments and Stakeholders**

**Members of the Media**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. President of the Republic, his Excellency, Cyril Ramaphosa, has committed government to ensure that people with disability in the government sector and society, have equitable access to education, health services, employment, social security and all opportunities that come with living in a democratic society.
2. This is in line with the caring nature of the ANC-led government and it finds reflection across all spheres of government and as custodians of rights of people with disabilities here in Mpumalanga, we are committed to ensure that all programmes in the province mainstream these rights.
3. We must all contribute and work towards the realization of the rights of people with disabilities and our plans must reflect this. No more should people with disabilities face prejudice be it in government, private sector and any other areas in society.
4. We must make the empowerment of people with disabilities a lived reality which should never be compromised upon. As we launch the provincial disability rights awareness month, we must commit ourselves to eradicate the exclusion errors that discriminate against people with disabilities and develop coherent programmes in our communities to transform the lives of our people.
5. we must do this in cognisant of the fact that people with disabilities have rights to fully participate in all structures and even assume leadership roles.
6. The former president of the republic, Tata Nelson Mandela, said and I quote: ***It is not for people living with disabilities to adapt to the dominant and dominating world of the so called non-disabled. It is for us to adapt to our understanding of a common humanity, to learn of the richness of how human life is diverse, to recognise the presence of disability in our human midst as an enrichment of our diversity.*** Unquote

7. Since assuming this portfolio as the political head of social development, I have dedicated myself to the cause of crafting better ways to unlock opportunities that will benefit people with disabilities and albinism.
8. One cannot deliver on this huge responsibility without the support and inputs of all stakeholders and we must work together to realise this.
9. As country, we have set aside the 3rd of November – 3rd of December as National Disability Rights Awareness Month in line with the programme of the United Nations. We will celebrate National Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December with the objective of showcasing the abilities and talents of persons with disabilities as productive members of society.
10. The observance of the day aims to promote and bring about understanding of disability issues and mobilise support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.
11. The Disability Rights Awareness Month 2019 comes against the backdrop of a series of important activities that are not limited to: The outcome of the 25 Year Review calling for accelerated action to meaningfully change the lives of people with disabilities; Assist with prioritisation to strengthen measures to promote, protect and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities and albinism; and to Provide renewed opportunities for government to mainstream disability across all programmes during the current Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF);
12. This year's campaign is observed under the theme - 25 Years of Democracy: "Together Building a Disability Inclusive and Safe South Africa".
13. The overall and overarching strategic objectives for the provincial programmes are to unite the people of Mpumalanga, mobilise active and patriotic citizenry, inspire hope and to communicate disability inclusion commitments contained in the 2019 – 24 MTSF as well as national and provincial programme of action.
14. Government Departments have a minimum target of 2% to be achieved in ensuring that there is compliance in relation to employment statistics. To this end, five departments have satisfied this threshold with the rest moving towards to the required standard. We want to encourage the private sector to do the same
15. As we launch this campaign, the country will hold its National Day of Persons with Disabilities on the 3rd of December and Mpumalanga will subsequently follow with provincial events on the 5th, 6th and 9th December in all the districts. On the same token, there are a series of activities that will be undertaken by all departments and entities as part of the programme of action.

16. We have recently done a sod-turning ceremony for the construction of the Hlayisani Centre of Hope in Khumbula Village which will provide much needed recreational and rehabilitation services, skills development and employment opportunities particularly for persons with disabilities.
17. Let me also take this opportunity and welcome the support shown by the business community by working with government on disability mainstreaming, and providing and enhancing support to employees with disabilities.
18. We have also worked with the Kruger National Park to improve the lives of people with disabilities and in the past three years, the park hosted children living with disabilities from local municipalities during the Transport and Deaf Awareness Month.
19. Whilst appreciating the role played by the Kruger National Park as a strategic partner, we are looking forward at entering into new partnerships with other institutions to make a meaningful impact into the sector.
20. To this end, let me congratulate the Provincial Office on the Status of Disabled Persons for its nomination as finalists of the Kudu Awards 2019. This came as a result of the support and workshops on disabilities that were conducted at SanParks. We wish the office well as they will be representing the province at the national event scheduled for the 29th November in Gauteng.
21. We cannot end our speech without congratulating once more the springboks for their triumph in lifting up the Webb Ellis Trophy. We hope this victory will unleash the potential of all South Africans to confront the challenges besieging us as a country.
22. We also congratulate our Ntando Mahlangu for winning the 2019 Sportsman of the Year with Disability. The Sports Awards recognises outstanding achievements.
23. I want to thank all of you present here and let us work together to ensure that children with disabilities are not excluded from attaining education in our schools, elders living with disabilities are not prevented from receiving their social grants and that they do not fall victim to abuse. Together we can make Mpumalanga better.
24. I now declare the Disability Rights Awareness Month officially, we call upon every citizens and stakeholders to take part in supporting and embracing people with disabilities where humanly possible.

This call is aimed at inspiring hope and confidence to address the common challenges facing persons with disabilities and society in general.

Thank you.