

Compiled by: Mr Likho Bottoman  
Extension: 3377  
Date: 20 April 2022

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION, DR REGINAH MHAULE, MP, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE 2022 SCHOOLS DEMOCRACY JOHN TAOLWEEK HELD AT REKGARATLHILE HIGH SCHOOL, JOHN TAOLO GAETSEWE DISTRICT, KURUMAN**

**FRIDAY, 22 APRIL 2022, 10:00**

Programme Director

Education MEC for Northern Cape, Mr Zolile Monakali

Executive Mayor of John Taolo Gaetsewe District, Ms Queen Mokgatle

Local Mayor of the Gasegonyana Local Municipality, Mr Neo Masegela

His Royal Highness, The Chief, Kgosi Setlhodi

Provincial Electoral Officer in the Northern Cape, Mr Bonolo Modise

Vice Chair of the Independent Electoral Commission South Africa, Ms Janet Love

CEO of the Independent Electoral Commission South Africa, Mr Sy Mamabolo

District Director, Mr Vuyani Teise

National and Provincial Senior Managers

Provincial Programme Managers and Coordinators

District Officials

School Principal, Mr Disipi and the School Management Team at large

SGB Chairperson, Ms Seamogano and the SGB at large

President of the Representing Council of Learners and the RCL at large

Colleagues in the IEC

Teachers, Parents, Learners

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

It gives me great pleasure to stand here today and address this occasion as we are drawing nearer to the end of Freedom Month April 2022. As part of the support that we receive from our partner, the IEC, we usually target this period around Freedom Day, 27 April, to amplify our democracy education efforts. We declare the week School Democracy Week. This year, the week starts on Monday, 25 April 2022 and extends until Friday, 29 April 2022. During this period, Basic Education and IEC collaborate in different provinces to embark on a campaign that aims to reinforce the curriculum offering on human rights, democracy and civic education.

This year, South Africa celebrates Freedom Month under the theme: “**Consolidating our Democratic Gains**”, to mark the country’s transition from the oppressive apartheid regime to a free democratic country. The first democratic elections on 27 April 1994 gave birth to our constitutional democracy. For the majority of South Africans who had never voted before, their dignity was restored and the country transformed to a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. It led to the emergence of a national identity built on a respect for each other and our love for our country. This year’s Freedom Month celebration takes place as the country emerges after two years under the weight of COVID-19. In the spirit of the month, it is time to come together as one nation to rebuild our country from the devastating effects of the virus. We call on our school communities to use Freedom Month and Freedom Day celebrations to pull together.

As we celebrate the democratic freedoms that we enjoy today in a democratic South Africa, it is important for the basic education sector to also reflect on the hard-to-shift violent practice of Corporal Punishment in our schools. South Africa recognizes that corporal punishment is an inhumane method of consequence management, which has apartheid connotations. It undermines the democratic gains of the country. It includes any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light, as well

as non-physical forms of punishment that are cruel and degrading. Any corporal punishment violates children's right to respect for their human dignity and physical integrity, and their rights to health, development, education and freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The education laws in South Africa have declared corporal punishment illegal. Freedom Month is therefore utilized to make a public call to end violence against children and *End Corporal Punishment*.

Programme Director, as we launch the 2022 School Democracy Week, there are a couple of things we should not leave unsaid when we depart from this gathering. The fact of the matter is that Freedom Month will forever resonate as a turning point in the history of our democracy. The freedom struggle and the sacrifices that were endured by many heroes, both the celebrated stalwarts and the unsung heroes and heroines, led to our country's first democratic elections on 27 April 1994. That is why it is important to teach young people that our democracy was a collective effort of the people, and not an achievement of particular popular figures. And so through the power of the vote, South Africans made their stand against tyranny and changed the course for our nation. Our freedom was entrenched within the adoption of the Constitution of South Africa in 1996, which ushered in a new social order of constitutionalism. That is why in

our democratic and civic education programming in the basic education sector, we must include the promotion of constitutional values, including rights and responsibilities. The Constitution enshrines the rights of every South African and explains our obligations as citizens to each other that allow us all to enjoy our freedoms, including the right to vote.

Thus, we can never take our freedom for granted because our freedom was not free. The lethargy and despondence among youth to register to vote is very disturbing, my Honourable Mayor. It is in fact a passive aggressive demonstration of taking for granted the right to vote. Young people need to understand that our road to democracy required untold sacrifice, and many people paid the ultimate price for us to be free. We will never forget how, in particular, Black South Africans were systematically marginalised and exploited by unjust apartheid laws. They were stripped of their human rights, including the right to vote, dispossessed of their land, their livelihoods undermined and freedom of movement limited. Our democracy has restored the dignity of millions of South Africans and changed our lives for the better. We are not saying that the situation of our people is at its optimum best, but we are taking deliberate steps to get there, especially through the implementation of our District Development Model. That is why all these members of our DDM in JTG are here to commemorate this day with us. As the older

generation, we can only do so much but the reality is that it is incumbent on each generation to safeguard our freedom and extend it to the next generation. Hence, collaboration with learners is important to ensure that girls' education receives priority and that there is a place of support and refuge for adolescent boys and young men in schools. We are keen that all our learners in their gender diversity, find relevance in the Democracy Education Programme. We do this because we recognise that previous narratives of democracy education have unintendedly excluded matters of gender diversity and limited gender issues only to women's issues, without looking at the entire gender spectrum.

The South African offering of democracy education has made significant progress in transforming our society from an apartheid state into a democratic one. The values of human dignity, non-racialism and non-sexism, and the rule of law remain paramount in our nation. Young people have been given their democratic right to vote from the age of 18, including the ability to register on the voter's roll from the age of 16. This means that learners enrolled in secondary schools must know that they can register as early as 16 years of age. This means that if you are 14 years of age today, you will be 16 years old in the 2024 national election season, meaning you will be eligible to register as a voter. Likewise, if you are 16 today, you can already register as

a voter, putting you in good stead to vote in the 2024 national election season because you would have turned 18 by then.

Registration on the voter's roll is not only open during election season, learners can approach their IEC registration points to register. I am hoping that the IEC colleagues will make available to the school information of where learners can register. I was told that the IEC might just be able to register some learners here on site at the Rekgarathile Secondary School. Beyond the general elections, we also want to encourage learners to take part in electing their Representative Council of Learners (RCL) because, among all learner formations, this is the only one that is legislated and it exists in ALL schools in the country. This democracy education should be extended to the parental fraternity to support election of School Governing Bodies. Programme Director, we are really disheartened by the declining participation of parents and caregivers in matters of the school because it is probably our only chance to realise the vision of making education a societal issue.

I am delighted to launch the 2022 School Democracy Week on behalf of the partnership that we enjoy with the IEC. The School Democracy Week is just a launch pad to a broader continuous Democracy Education Programme, which is offered at schools in Human Rights and Values Education as part of Life

Orientation. Let us continue to work for freedom from poverty, unemployment, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. As a nation, we are stronger together and have more in common than that which divides us. Each citizen has a responsibility to take charge and play an active role in building the democratic South Africa that we want. Our history of division, injustice and suffering should inspire us to build a better and more united nation.

We must continue to address the triple threat of poverty, inequality and unemployment. We must work to create a nation that has equal opportunities across all areas of society. We are commemorating this Freedom month against the backdrop of escalating rates of gender-based violence and child molestation. Therefore, it is important for us to use this space to advocate for the protection of the rights of women and children. Abuse against women and children goes against the founding values of our constitutional democracy, which is built on human rights, human dignity and equality for all. As we commemorate Freedom Day, let us redouble our efforts to end the injustices wherever they emerge. This includes intensifying efforts to End Violence Against Children – and to End Corporal Punishment. This is our contribution as the sector's to the overall Child Protection narrative and real celebration of democracy. These are all the social ills that we should keep in mind as hindrances over the

attainment of a true democratic state. With these words, I would like to declare the School Democracy Week launched, courtesy of the DBE and the IEC.

I thank you!