

Message of support by Dr Nobuhle Nkabane, Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, on the occasion of the Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Campaign, 2nd September 2021

It gives me great pleasure to be here today, as we collectively endeavor to combat some of the most adverse social ills faced by our people, among which is the 'Foetal Alcohol Syndrome' - whose impact on our communities is not always sufficiently understood or appreciated.

We all know that in 1994 our country embarked on a national democratic transition from the ruins of the old apartheid dispensation towards the kind of society envisaged in our Constitution. It is a society that we as a people must ensure is inclusive of all our people so that all of us can be proud to call ourselves South Africans without any fear of self-contradiction. During the era that President Mandela called the 'skunk of the world,' many social ills mushroomed including that of alcoholism. Over the years and following our admission into the international community of free and democratic nations, our country has again seen an increased usage of substance abuse and trafficking.

Clearly, we cannot claim equal citizenship for all our people when adverse social ills such as drug and substance abuse continue to undermine our collective claim to humanity. Drugs and substance abuse dehumanize our people and, generally our youth in particular. By so doing drugs and substance abuse rob the youth of our country of what could be the potential of a bright future, degrading them into the meaninglessness of life, and labelled as street kids, hobos, amaphara and so forth. Such substance abuse can result in

permanent life changing disabilities that negatively impact on the socio-economic circumstances of the individual, the family, society and government.

I am therefore heartened by the continued work of the Department of Social Development for its vigilance in safeguarding the safety and future potential of our children and the youth against drugs and substance abuse.

We are here today because the Department of Social Development has joined the international community in campaigning against the prevalence of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, caused by excessive drinking by pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. Nature has endowed mothers with the sole gift of bearing children in their wombs as well as breastfeeding them, giving them a chance to face life through a healthy head start. I hope that through the leadership of the DSD as you spearhead the implementation of the National Drug Master Plan we will reap the results of a healthier nation whose youth compete with the best in the world in various human endeavors including sport, science, engineering, business, the arts and so forth.

However, as we know, some mothers give in to alcohol abuse during these very critical times of the development of the foetus, and instead of giving life to the unborn baby, they end up giving them very serious disabilities including in some cases death.

Those well breast-fed babies who are safely carried throughout the term of pregnancy without alcohol abuse have a better head start in life compared to those denied this because their mothers were addicted to alcohol.

As the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, we deemed it fit that we should participate in this event to give our unequivocal support to combating

the 'Foetal Alcohol Syndrome' which is also a menace among the communities where we primarily serve out our mandate in mining and energy. Collectively we should consider the Foetal Alcohol Syndrome as a brutal assault on the rights of the unborn children and breastfed babies of our nation.

We are here because as government we continue to address the challenges faced by our people in a comprehensive manner, such as those pertaining to poverty, unemployment, access to education, human settlement, health, safety and security and so forth. Just this past week the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy Mr Gwede Mantashe was here in Emalahleni at the Mthimkhulu Home for the Aged, to hand over various gifts to enhance the livelihoods of the residents of the home. Our constant presence in our communities across the country is precisely because as government we will leave no stone unturned in order to ensure the continued growth of a caring society.

We therefore continue to build a caring society and as we do so, the test of our claim and commitment to progress is when we defend the most vulnerable amongst us. And in that sense, there is none most vulnerable than the unborn and breastfed babies as well as the aged.

As the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, we will continue to champion various social causes informed by our departmental mandate, such as those pertaining to Social and Labour Plans. Through the Social and Labour Plans that emanate from the Mining Charter, we continue to hold mining companies accountable and committed to social development, such as building the clinics that the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy Mr

Gwede Mantashe launched in Middelburg and Barberton within the past two months.

Deputy Minister Bogopane-Zulu

I am happy that you invited us to be part of this very important event, and I would like to thank the community of Emalahleni who are present here at the Rock of Ages Church for supporting this very noble campaign amongst others by their very presence here today. It must not be that while we work to spearhead transformation in various areas of societal life, we are nonetheless confronted and drawn back by a scourge that could have been prevented.

Let us be united in giving our children a fair chance to life by banishing alcohol consumption among pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. Male spouses and partners who are fathers to the unborn babies and those still being breast fed must pledge solidarity by also desisting from excessive alcohol consumption that can end up spilling over into the behavior of the mothers. The same must apply to other family members who must desist from smoking close to pregnant women and children.

Working together we will build a better nation!

I thank you!