

SPEECH BY THE MEC: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT HON.M.A. MOKABA-PHUKWANA ON THE CELEBRATION OF FUN DAY AND DISABILITY PRIDE PARADE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, AT BOLIVIA LODGE, CAPRICORN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY ON 23 NOVEMBER 2017.

Program Director,

Let us pray and wish the citizens of Zimbabwe and diaspora well in their endeavor to reinstate Zimbabwe to their once promising economic and sustainable nation that had capacity to be the Southern Africa community food basket. Bikram Choudhury once said:

"Never too old, never too bad, never too late, and never too sick to start from scratch once again".

What I like most about change is that it's a synonym for hope. If you are taking a risk, what you are really saying is, I believe in tomorrow and I will be part of it, by Linda Ellerbe.

The Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality;

The Executive Mayor of Polokwane Local Municipality;

Our Contestants and Participants from our Beloved Disabled Community;

Dedicated Leadership of People with Disabilities in the Province;

The Head of Department Mme Ramokgopa, the Management and Staff of the Department of Social Development;

Officials from other National and Provincial Government and Municipalities;

Our Partners from Civil Society, Parents and Guardians of the Disabled;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The 3rd of December was declared by United Nations as The International Day of Persons with Disabilities as proclaimed through the UN resolution 47/3 in 1982. The annual observance of this day on our calendars aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development. To also increase awareness on the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

Building on many decades of UN's work in the field of disability, the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, adopted in 2006, has further advanced the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international development frameworks includes the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Some of the programs under vision 2030 include among others, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, the New Urban Agenda, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.

Program Director,

It is important that we all appreciate the theme of this year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities named: "*Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all*".

This theme, ladies and gentlemen wants to ensure that the 2030 Agenda adopted by the United Nations is as inclusive as possible and leave no one behind. Our common understanding is that persons with disabilities, as both beneficiaries and agents of change, can fast track the process towards inclusive and sustainable development. They can and must promote resilient society for all, including in the disaster risk reduction and urban development.

Today, governments, throughout the world, persons with disabilities and their representatives, community based and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and business work together to achieve the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As a tradition, in South Africa, the 3rd December annually marks the beginning of the *Disability Awareness Month*. This period provides us with an opportunity to achieve the goal of full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society by persons with disabilities. The project was established by the World Program of Action concerning Disabled Persons and was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Like citizens of the world, our South African celebrations of the Disability month aims to achieve the following fundamental objective:

Firstly, to raise an understanding of disability issues,

Secondly, to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and,

Thirdly, to promote gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of the political, social, economic and cultural development.

If we unite as a nation and bring on board everyone regardless of race, tribe, gender, physical or economic status will could achieve much more towards sustainable socio-economic development.

Program Director

It is a fact today, that an estimated one billion people living with disabilities worldwide face many barriers to inclusion in most key aspects of society. As a result, people with disabilities do not enjoy access to most societal opportunities and facilities. This could be seen in transportation, employment, education as well as social and political participation. The right to participate in public life is essential to create stable democracies, active citizenship and reduce inequalities in society.

One American Baseball player Jim Abbot ones said:

"There are millions of people out there ignoring disabilities and accomplishing incredible feats [things]. I learned you can learn to do things differently, but do them just as well. I've learned that it's not the disability that defines you, it is how you deal with the challenges the disability presents you with. And I've learned that we have an obligation to the abilities we DO have, not the disability."

It is within this context that our government maintains that persons with disabilities must be able to fulfil their role in society and participate on an equal basis with others. Therefore it is important for us as people of the world and our country to focus on the ability and not on the disability of an individual.

Often, the societal image of persons with disabilities is negatively impacted by attitudes based on stigma and discrimination which manifest as barrier towards realizing their potential.

It is thus important, ladies and gentlemen, to note that disability is part of the human condition. That all of us either are or will become disabled to one degree or another during the course of our lives.

Within this notion people with disabilities are not supposed to be viewed as a charity case, but equal citizens capable of doing that which people living without disability are capable of.

Program Director

With this context we need to promote empowerment, create real opportunities for people with disabilities. This approach will enhance their own capacities and supports them in setting their own priorities. Critical amongst this should be the need to involve people with disabilities in processes of decision making affecting their lives and well-being.

Empowerment in this instance has to involve investing in people with disabilities - in jobs, health, nutrition, education, and social protection. When people are empowered they are better prepared to take advantage of opportunities and become agents of change.

To us this celebration once more provides us with a commitment that the ANC led Government made to our people that in a free post-apartheid South Africa, the people of our land shall be equal and treated as free citizens of the world irrespective of colour, disability, background or creed.

This type of gatherings should always be a constant reminder of the many tasks that still face us as a nation. We need to remind ourselves that we have emerged from the era and epoch wherein disability was treated with disdain.

Having arrived where we are today, we need to make sure that we wage serious battles to win the war against any form of discrimination. We need to integrate our society and efforts to realize the ANC's motto that working together we can achieve more.

Program Director

It is not therefore not a historical coincidence that ANC-led government has included people with disabilities in the designated group. The pronouncement was not only to compensate this group for the many years of discrimination and stereotyping, but as to ensure that they are able to be empowered and compete on equal footing with the rest of the populace. They have to have access to all rights and services that their compatriots are enjoying.

We are therefore not apologetic and without fear of contradiction that as we address this session we are making a commitment and clarion all South Africans to join the rest of the world citizens in celebrating the International Day of People Living with Disabilities on Sunday December 03 that 2017. This is the moment in which we strive to ensure the *Transformation of all members of our society towards sustainable and resilient development.*

A society which according to our stalwart, former President of the ANC, O.R Tambo said:

"It is our responsibility to break down barriers of division and create a country where there will be neither Whites nor Blacks, but just South Africans, free and united in diversity.

To our special guests and participants in the Fun Day and the Beauty Pageant we live with the promise to continue as you have shown us today to be proud South Africans entitled to have access to any rights and freedoms as the rest of our citizens. We undertake to remove any societal barriers that undermine the potential of the disabled to realize their reason for to be what they can be.

In expressing our gratitude to the organizers, I would urge our HOD and her team to consider introducing debating some stereotypes as an item in our activities. That will grant our disabled to articulate their frustrations and set the agenda towards inclusivity.

In conclusion I will like to leave you with Maya Angelou's quotation that:

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel".

We are confident as the Department of Social Development, the Provincial Government, and citizens of this beautiful province that together we will not forget and we shall move South Africa Forward.

Re a leboga!!!