

Speech to be delivered by the MEC for Education, Mrs. Reginah Mhaule at the launch of the National LSEN All Ages Games in Secunda on 26 October 2015

Programme Director; Mr. Bulelani Ndzece

The Executive Mayor of Govan Mbeki Local Municipality, Cllr. Lindy Masina

National SASA II President, Mrs. Lizzy Vogel and her National SASAII Executive

Provincial SASA II Chairperson, Mrs. Adeline Mbele and her Provincial SASAII Executive

SASAII National and Provincial Code Conveners

Members of the LOC Committee

Mpumalanga School Sport Organization (MPUSSO)

Educators from all Provinces.

Departmental Officials from National and all Provinces

Representatives of the Mpumalanga Sports Academy

Representatives from Lulamisa Community Development

Representatives from the National lottery

Representatives from SASOL

Representatives from Ukhozi Lodge

Representatives from Graceland Casino

Representatives from BMW Plannacle Secunda

Representatives from Medi-Clinic Highveld.

Pastor Leslie Zulu

Members of SGBs

Parents and

LSEN Learners from all Provinces

Technical Officials

Members of Media

Sanibonani,

I am very grateful to be gathered here with you today, it is undoubtedly going to be an exciting week for not only the town of Secunda but the province as a whole, having the opportunity to host the 2015 National LSEN all Ages Games is indeed a privilege.

Today, therefore I stand in front of you not only on my capacity, but on behalf of the leadership of the province, the Acting Honourable Premier, Mr. Vusimuzi Shongwe, who is not only proud, but ecstatic that the province has been given such an opportunity.

I thus wish to welcome you in the place of the rising sun and wish all you well not just to partake in this sports programme but also to encourage you to enjoy our provincial splendor and hospitality.

The Importance of Sports in our schools

It goes without saying that sports play a significant role in our lives.

As the Mpumalanga Department of Education we always encourage our learners to take part in extra-curriculum activities because this plays an important role in a child's developmental process.

Research confirms that children who participate in extramural activities manage their time carefully and inherit discipline that allows them to always make sure that no aspects of their school life are neglected.

This is therefore even more important for learners with special needs, as it encourages a great improvement of levels of physical health and well-being, especially improvements in self –confidence, social awareness and self – esteem.

We come a long way as a nation to reach the point where we are today in terms of the provision of sport and recreational opportunities and access for people living with disabilities. We have to acknowledge that the provision of access for people with disabilities to quality physical activity and sporting opportunities must be addressed on an equal basis with those of their non-disabled peers.

This event is one of the many testimonies that South Africa strives for a better life for all as our talented athletes compete with one another showcasing what they are capable of.

We are hopeful and encouraged that this spectacular will not only make way for physical prowess and engagement but will also provide social and cognitive benefits to our participants and officials.

Address the learners taking part in the LSEN All Ages Games

I am therefore very proud of each and every learner who participates in these games, and I hope that you are able to encourage more friends to be part of these games.

I want to see you one day on television, representing South Africa in the Paralympics, raising the flag of our country with pride and confidence, It may seem like a farfetched dream, but a great writer once stated that, ***“whatever you set your mind on, you can achieve it”***

Take reference from athletes such as Natalie du Toit and others who have fought against great strides to ensure that they made it in the world of sports despite their physical challenges.

These games are therefore one of the building blocks in ensuring that we break down the barriers that are facing our children.

I also wish to thank you for having moved beyond barriers that might have contributed to your low levels of participation such as poor physical education provision in schools; low expectations from communities, families and peers; poor community facilities and lack of access to facilities and programmes.

For me your presence here is confirmation that you are all deserving champions who have made it despite all odds. I just want to remind once more keep up the faith and carry on with your sports ambition.

Speak to the teachers and coaches

Educators and coaches, sports can be used as a centre for building and shaping the characters of these children, through sports you can build their confidence levels, and this will not only benefit them physically and emotionally, but also academically.

The level of discipline required on the sporting field, they will apply in their studies. This therefore ensures that you are playing a very big role in the development of these children.

Amongst yourself also, as people from different provinces, take this week as a window of opportunity opened to us as a form of a networking session, where we can meet and exchange ideas of how we can best improve the lives of our children as well as excel in sports as a nation. Let's share our best practices and learn from one another.

Conclusion

As I conclude, allow me to thank each and everyone of you for taking your time to visit our province, I hope that you are able to appreciate the beauty and splendour of our province which bows to you in respect of your participation to this programme.

Let me also remind you of the enormous benefits that come with physical exercise. I humbly wish all of you to experience the pleasure and enjoyment that comes from physical exercise and sport and wish that will be sufficient reasons for your participation beyond these games.

There is more value to sport which translate to endurance, physical well being and social cohesion. Enjoy every moment of this and be champions.

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My children, I wish each and every one of you the best in these games, it is however between me and you that I shall be rooting for the Mpumalanga team to do us proud in the sporting activities.

Ngiyabonga and Let the Games Begin.