

Speech to be delivered by the MEC for Education, Mrs. Reginah Mhaule at the launch of the National LSEN All Ages Games Awards Ceremony on 28 October 2015

Programme Director;

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,

On Monday at the occasion of the Official Opening of these games, we were showered rain which in our culture symbolized a blessing and our warm hospitality.

That rain ushered in an exciting week for the province, the place of the rising sun, it appreciated the opportunity to host the 2015 National LSEN all Ages Games.

Tonight , I therefore I stand in front of you on behalf of the leadership of the province, the Acting Honourable Premier, Mr. Vusimuzi Shongwe, who is ecstatic that the province has been given such an opportunity to give host to these important games.

It is my hope that you found Mpumalanga to be warm, welcoming and receptive in the true sense of the word.

Indeed, the Mpumalanga is haven of champions and thus befitting for it to host these games.

The Importance of Sports in our schools

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.

Our collective view is that this is 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.

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 to showcase 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

Sports has always been a vehicle for building and shaping the characters, improve confidence levels and for physically, emotionally, academically wellbeing of our children.

The level of discipline required on the sporting field manifest itself in our children studies.

We wish to take this opportunity and thank our teachers and coaches who ensure that this is achieved.

Nelson Mandela once said:

"Sport has the power to change the world, It has the power to inspire," "It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers."

Conclusion

As I conclude, allow me to thank each and everyone of you for taking your time to visit our province and for coordinating this occasion. I hope that you appreciate the beauty and splendour of our province.

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

My children, as we congratulate those who will be receiving medals and awards, please know that you are all winners.

I request you to celebrate yourselves and your life each and everyday.

I wish to close with the scripture from Isaiah 40 verse 31 which read as follows:

“But those who trust in the Lord will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.”

I pray that whatever you lay your hands on must turn into gold.

Ngiyabonga.