



## **MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS**

Republic of South Africa

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### **ADDRESS BY THE HON. NOSIVIWE MAPISA –NQAKULA AT THE DOD VHEMBE DISTRICT CAREER EXHIBITION, LOUIS TRICHARD HIGH SCHOOL, MAKHADO ON 26 JUNE 2015**

During our visit to this region, last year we undertook to start planting a seed of partnership between the SANDF and the communities surrounding the Makhado Air Force Base. This was important given, the vast opportunities for social and economic development that can be derived from such a partnership through the day to day activities and requirements of the base.

During our visit we made the emphatic decision to adopt two schools that had delivered excellent performances in previous matric results with a view to open learning and training opportunities for these learners within the wide scope of careers within the Defence environment. The two schools, Kutama High and Mbilwi Secondary schools were also selected for participation in the youth program for the Bi-annual Africa Aerospace and Defence Exhibition that took place at the Waterkloof Air Force Base in Pretoria last year.

Since then, I've been encouraged by the feedback we have received that the base has intensified its interaction with the communities through the

schools and is aiming to increase its network of partner schools within the region.

Program Director and our fellow learners,

I hope you are aware from history lessons that today is Freedom Charter Day. It was on this day in 1955, at the heart of Apartheid, that South Africans from all walks of life, gathered together to define their wishes for a new South Africa that they want to live in. That was 60 years ago and all of you were not yet born, but when they met on that day, our forefathers and mothers then, were thinking of the kind of country they wished for you, their future grandchildren, to live in. They vowed not only to declare these wishes, but also their willingness to fight, even to the death, to make sure that their wishes for you were achieved. Their quest was indeed achieved when in 1996, after attaining our freedom and democracy, a new, the contents of the Freedom Charter became the base document for the new Constitution of a democratic and free South Africa.

Today marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that occasion, when black and white, women and men, urban and rural, vowed to work together, despite a system that divided them to plan a just future for their beloved country. Many of them did not live to see the day when in April 1994, South Africa became free and ushered in a democracy. But they left an inheritance more valuable than any other, an example for us to emulate in taking our country forward.

Their unity, even during those difficult days, teaches us of how much we today can achieve if we put aside our differences and work together for a

common cause, a common future for ourselves and for generations to come after us.

It is my wish that this and many other uplifting testimonies of the journey to freedom and democracy must be taught to our children in schools, particular the type of history that shows how we worked together, despite the heavy handed efforts of the previous system that sought to divide us.

As we commemorate this day, I will like to just use this opportunity to introduce you to the Freedom, for those of you who are hearing it for the first time, and to urge you to familiarize yourselves with this important and significant historical document that was drawn by ordinary South Africans and later defined our Constitution. In its preamble it reads:

***We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:***

1. that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;
2. that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;
3. that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

4. that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;
  
5. And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this Freedom Charter;
  
6. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won. It then goes on to list 10 articles on which the new South Africa should be based, including the first one that demanded that **“The People Shall Govern!”** I hope we may have the opportunity to distribute a pamphlet of this historic document for those schools who may want to still familiarise themselves with it.

#### Program Director

It is therefore most fitting that I address high school students in this area on this important day, coinciding with the month of June when we celebrate the youth of South Africa. This is the month when we acknowledge and honor the heroic role young people played to bring about democracy and freedom in our country.

Our country may be free, but the tough work has only begun. 21 years into our democracy, we still face many challenges from our past, and we

together, are called upon, not just to complain and blame the past for them, but to address them.

Too many of our people still live in abject poverty and are without the basic necessities that ensures a better quality of life. There are high levels of unemployment among the youth, many of whom are unskilled. This has perpetuated chronic poverty, resulting in social ills such as crime and substance abuse. Form these and many other challenges, I can tell you that the future stability of our country is under threat. If we do not offer opportunities for our young people to realize their full potential and become productive citizens, then the future for which our forefathers wished for us, is doomed.

I address you today very mindful of the fact that in front of me are young people who must be given the tools to improve their lives and positively shape the future of this country.

It is a responsibility that all of us particularly those of us in leadership positions cannot take seriously and commit to concrete action.

Both the Departments of Defence and Military Veterans, under our Ministry, are determined to place youth at the centre of its plans to create a highly professional, disciplined and technologically advanced defence force equipped to execute its core constitutional mandate and other assigned tasks.

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has a strong footprint in the province of Limpopo. Two of our Air Force bases are located here in Makhado and Hoedspruit. The Army's 15 and 7 infantry battalions are located in Thohoyandou and Phalaborwa respectively. Other smaller units are scattered throughout the province. Yet it is doubtful whether the people of Limpopo have a full appreciation of the work done by the defence force and the extent to which it impacts on their lives.

Early this month Parliament approved a Defence Review which is a comprehensive policy blueprint for the defence force for the next 20 years.

The recruitment into the Defence Force of young South Africans with great potential is critical to our efforts to have a military that efficiently and effectively serves the needs of the country and its people. We are here to expose the work of the Defence Force and create awareness of the full range of its activities and its role in society as well as career opportunities that exist in its various components. I urge you walk through our career exhibition and engage with officials manning the stands.

The Defence Force recruits young people through the Military Skills Development System (MSDS) and University Reserve Training Programme (URTP). These programmes will be explained to you by officials at the exhibition. Suffice to say that the programmes offer opportunities of training and employment in the regular and reserve forces. Those who cannot be absorbed in the military will have the skills and training to compete on the open labor market, including in technical fields such as engineering, energy and the maritime industry.

The Defence Force comprises of the Navy, Army, Air Force and Medical Health Services. All arms of service are in need of people in disciplines such as engineering, medicine, avionics, nautical sciences, computer science and finance. The list is by no means exhaustive. We continue to build relationships with schools and tertiary institutions to enable us to identify young people we need to build a Defence Force capable of executing its mandate.

Recently, I received a presentation from the Chief of the Air Force, who informed me that plans are afoot to extend their “Siyandiza” program to include, flying clubs such as paragliding clubs in rural communities to encourage young people to have a feel of the aviation experience. This initiative will address a serious factor that has barred young gifted children from rural areas from entering the Air Force pilot training programs. I am sure that in the near future the other services will extend similar interventions, including the Navy swimming training program with facilities in rural areas.

While there are exciting career opportunities in the Defence Force, I must stress that there is a limit to the numbers we can employ due to acute budgetary constraints. We have, however, arrangements with other government departments in the security cluster such as Correctional Services, Police, State Security and Home Affairs to absorb people trained by us.

It is also important for me to point out that the Defence does more than just recruit and train fighting soldiers. It produces a disciplined leadership cadre imbued with values of selfless service and patriotism. A civic education that instills these values is a critical part of the training and education curriculum in the Defence Force. This is why people with a solid military grounding are sought after in the private sector and elsewhere.

The role of the military goes beyond its constitutional mandate to defend the country and protect its people. There are many capabilities that reside in the Defence Force which enable it to make a significant contribution to the economic development of the country and to the welfare of its people.

Defence Forces around the world increasingly require scientific know-how and technological innovation. In the United States 25% of scientists are employed in military related industries. The application of the research and work done by these scientists extends beyond the military to benefit the whole society. Many of you may not be aware that products such as the microwave and the internet were first developed for use in military platforms. This is the case with many appliances used everyday in our homes.

South Africa has a fairly developed defence industry that supplies the SANDF with some of its products and technology requirements. The industry also exports to foreign markets earning the country much needed hard currency. It is also a vast repository of scientific knowledge and technological innovation. So career development within the defence environment should include careers in the defence industry for which our Ministry is also responsible. The Department of Defence has as one of its

strategic priorities the further development of the defence industry and its integration into mainstream industrial policy.

I am certain many of you have witnessed work done by the Defence Force to help communities in distress. In many parts of the country, particularly in rural areas, the military has assisted victims of natural disasters like floods; restored or built infrastructure; rescued those in peril; dispensed health care; and assisted the police restore law and order when requested to do so. This is what a people's Defence Force must do – use its inherent capabilities to protect people and improve their lives.

As you are aware this humanitarian work is not confined to South Africa, but stretch to our neighbouring countries in the region as well. This is in addition to the deployment of our troops in Africa for peacekeeping and enforcement in conflict areas. I mention these facts so that you have a full appreciation of the role of the military beyond that of defending the country and protecting all our people.

In 1994 seven statutory and non-statutory forces were integrated into what we now call the South African National Defence Force. This was a remarkable achievement indeed which played a crucial part in facilitating a peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy. Following the integration exercise the urgent priority was to transform the defence force to reflect the demographics of our country.

Last month I informed Parliament of my concern about the under-representation of racial minorities in the military. This problem is most serious at entry level of the largest Service of the SANDF – the SA Army.

The Chief of the SANDF has been instructed to embark on targeted recruitment to ensure an equitable representation of all racial groups in the military. The Defence Force must be in the forefront of promoting social cohesion in the country. It must open its doors to young people of all races and social backgrounds who wish to serve their country. This also entails recruitment in rural areas. The Rainbow Nation must be reflected in this

precious national asset which exists to serve us all. This is the message I want to leave you with. It is a message I will convey to young people in all parts of the country

Today, we have come here to invite you to join hands with the Defence Force for the development of our country and your communities. We are on an aggressive campaign to create awareness about the Defence Force and its work.

I want to thank the organisers, the parents, the principals, the teachers and all the learners for supporting this initiative. I also want to extend a special appreciation to the management and learners of Louis Trichardt High.

Let's join hands, and together we can make our country great.

I thank you