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1st International Conference on Military Law in South Africa

Before 1994 the Republic of South Africa (RSA) was isolated from participating in a number of aspects including dialogues within Africa and the world at large due to an adverse past political dispensation. This isolation also impacted on the evolution of the country's Military Law (which include Administration of Justice and Operational Law) and the comprehension of the importance of Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) during military operations.

Following the advent of a new democratic dispensation in April 1994, South Africa was welcomed back into the international community which led to her joining a number of important regional, continental and international organisations. As a result, the country has played and continues to play an important role in bringing peace and stability in the continent. In recent years our troops were deployed in Peace Support Operations (PSO) in a number of African countries, e.g. Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sudan, et cetera, and on humanitarian missions in Mozambique and elsewhere.

The RSA has a vibrant Constitution and a legal framework that deal with the employment of, and discipline within, the Defence Force. The country's Military Justice System is among the best; it has been tested and continues to be tested in the courts of the land including the Constitutional Court. However, our Military Law is still not well known except to those who are involved with it. As a result its evolution is dependant solely on practitioners for there is very little involvement of the academia and other stakeholders outside the Defence Force.

Giving effect to the Constitutional mandate that the Defence Force must be structured and managed as a disciplined military force, the Defence Legal Services Division (DLSD) was established. It is DLSD's mandate to fulfill, apply and promote this important part of the country's justice system - the Military Law.

Sadly, as it has been said above, Military Law is unknown or well appreciated in the country except to those Military Law Practitioners that are involved in it. As a result the civil society is not involved in the evolution of this system, which is robbing the Military community of growth and insight.

In 2014, the Military Command Council approved the hosting of an International Conference on Military Law by the SANDF. The Conference will be held on 01 to 03 November 2016 at the International Convention Center of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in Pretoria, RSA.

The objective of the conference is to expose and bring awareness to the South African public in general and academia in particular on the importance of Military Law within a country's legal system.

South Africa is among the leading countries in contributing military personnel and major equipment for peace missions in pursuance of its policy to promote peace and stability in the continent. The country's important role in mediation to end conflicts, has earned it a good standing, reputation and respect among the community of nations.

As an active participant in international structures, South Africa raises the interests of the African continent and other developing countries. Since it plays a meaningful role for the success of the region and the continent, it is incumbent that it stays afloat in every spectrum possible including the development and application of Military Law.

Furthermore here at home, the community at large; to some extent the Military community; academia and jurors alike seem not to be aware of the relevance, extent and application of Military Law.

Therefore, there is a need for the SANDF to host this kind of a conference wherein invited foreign and local Military Law Practitioners; academia and jurors are invited to participate in deliberations on the given theme - THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEMPORARY MILITARY LAW.

The Conference will be opened by the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans the Honourable Minister N.N. Mapisa-Nqakula. The Key Note Speaker will be our former Chief Justice, Justice Sandile Ngcobo.

ENDS.

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