

SPEECH DELIVERED BY LIMPOPO MEC MAVHUNGU LERULE-RAMAKHANYA AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF SPORTS GAMES FOR THE INTELLECTUALLY IMPAIRED AT PETER MOKABA STADIUM.

**Executive Mayor Capricorn District, Mamedupi Teffo
Executive Mayor for Polokwane Municipality, John Mpe**

It is humbling to be in your midst this evening and to be part of this very special occasion where we give recognition and support to our intellectually impaired learners. Nothing fulfils me more than giving a helping hand and support to the needy. I am grateful that today, the support that we are bringing is the access to various sporting codes for our special learners. As government, we always advocate for inclusive education and it must be the case with sports. It is unfortunate that the MEC of Sports Arts and Culture could not be with us because of other commitments but I know a programme of this nature is very close to her heart also.

There are a lot of benefits for our learners billed to participate in this year's edition and we hope that the number will increase next year.

We are here today to mark our unwavering support to all of you because we know what being here means to you. We have just over 2 million people with intellectual impairments around the world. Majority of them are now active in various sporting codes and thanks to the International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability for ensuring that no one is left behind. Since the formation of the Federation in 1986, we have seen an increase in the number of sporting events that cater for people living with disabilities. We know that for the longest time, our children and people living with disabilities were overlooked.

Special Olympics, the world's largest public health organization, has been very instrumental in offering continuous support to the needy. They have over the years provided a wider range of free health exams and care to athletes with neglected health problems. The ultimate goal is to ensure that there is fitness, nutrition and healthier lifestyles to everyone involved in special games like the ones we are launching this evening. It is for that reason why as government we deemed it fit to make sure that these games forge ahead and remain on our Calendar.

I am making a clarion call to Limpopo as the host, to ensure that our visitors are warmly welcomed and be treated with respect

and the dignity they deserve. We are a very caring Province and the games are hosted by the city of stars. We have no doubt that this edition will produce stars that are going to shine on international stages. This is your chance to prove to the doubting Thomases that your impairment is not a stumbling block to reach your dreams. You are here to have fun, compete and most importantly, to make friends.

I also want to take this opportunity to appreciate all the caregivers and educators who are responsible for your training sessions. We know and understand what it takes to prepare you for this stage. I know that they are not doing it on a voluntary basis but it needs a very special heart to fulfil the calling. We know at times you go beyond your scope of work to make sure that our children have access to all the aiding resources required to make their lives easy. It is because of you that we have all the learners from across the country converging in Limpopo to showcase their talents.

We have 21 special schools from Limpopo that are participating in this edition. Make us proud and be the best hosts. Sports is a catalyst for social cohesion, let's embrace and build one another as we interact and compete. Today is not a day for long

speeches but to appreciate the organizers for bringing you under one roof to keep you fit, both physically and mentally. We are here as the leading department to say our unconditional love and support will be with you throughout the games. Have fun and stay blessed!!!

I thank you!!