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Deputy Minister of Tourism, Mr Fish Mahlalela's engagement with the NGOs and CBOs of ZFM District Municipality on VOBID-19 and Gender Based Violence, Desert Palace Casino, Upington

21 September 2020

Executive Mayor of ZFM District Municipality
Mayors from Local Municipalities
Councillors from the District and other Local Municipalities
Representatives from various NGOs
Representatives from various CBOs
Officials from ZFM District
Officials from National Tourism Department
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good day

I take this opportunity to greet you and thank you for coming in numbers to this gathering. This is an indication to me that you also want to see the challenges facing our communities be eliminated.

At this point in time, all of us are aware that there are two pandemics that we are grappling with. One is COVID-19, for which a vaccine has not yet been found, and the other, the Gender Based Violence and Femicide, threatening to destroy our humanness.

Let me start with GBVF, since this is man-made and can be stopped. The scourge of Gender Based Violence and Femicide in South Africa has reached a point where it threatens our being as humans. Our dignity as a people is being degraded, so is our human-ness. If we continue to be silent this will mean that we are party to those that are perpetrators of this violence.

The President of the Republic, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa has again reminded all of us, when he gave his address on the 9 August 2020 that, as we mark Women's Day this year, South Africa is in the grip of two pandemics - the coronavirus pandemic and the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide.

He continued to say ever more women and children are being abused and losing their lives at the hands of men.

Instead of us celebrating that we have made gains in advancing women's rights, in broadening women's access to education, in the provision of health care and social support to women, and in improving their participation in the economy and decision-making, the joy is dampened by the tears of families who have lost their sisters, daughters and mothers to violence perpetrated by men.

As if that was not enough, these days children are kidnapped whilst with their parents. A very scary challenge that is emerging. There is even a suggestion that children should now be laced like dogs and chained to their parents whilst playing and walking. Really, is this the life that we want for our children?

Surely this is not what we thought the country will turn to be when we took power in 1994. We said to the people, we going to build a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it. Those who fought in the liberation struggle, did so for a free, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa that is united and prosperous.

How then can we talk about unity when our women and children are abused in this way? Can we continue and talk about prosperity?

Surely this cannot continue whilst we as organization within the community stand and watch. We can no longer as a nation ignore the deafening cries of women and children for protection, for help and for justice.

The President indicated further that, it has been eleven months since he addressed a joint sitting of Parliament to announce an Emergency Response Action Plan to combat gender-based-violence and Femicide. Have we tapped into this Response Action Plan? What is it that we are doing to put an end to this scourge?

We are here today to find a solution that we will together implement. It can not be Government alone that comes up with suggestion. We are in this together. We really need each other more than ever before. Our women and children need to be protected.

We need to pause and ask ourselves, who are these perpetrators of this violence within our community? What are the causes of such violent crimes? Unless we know who they are and what they are suffering from, we would not be able to identify the diagnosis for this sickness.

The purpose of our engagement today is to activate the mobilization by all our community structures to speak against all forms of abuse, be it at home, at work, in the community, in churches and in many more institutions where our women and children find themselves.

As we do so, we must be mindful of the fact that, COVID-19 is still with us. We are in the first day of Lockdown Level 1, but we are still under Lockdown. We need to remind one another of all the precautions to be taken as we fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The number of those infected are increasing by day. This might be due to the ignorance by our communities and them defying the COVID-19 regulations. It is our duty to continuously remind our communities of ways to protect themselves and others.

As we are now in level 1, we need to adhere to the reviewed COVID-19 protocols.

We are moving to a new phase in our response to the pandemic.

- The move to Alert Level 1 from midnight on 20 September 2020 is a positive sign that we are making progress in the fight against COVID-19.
- There has been a gradual but steady decline in number of new infections, hospitalisations and deaths.
- The demand for hospitalisation beds, ventilators, oxygen and other essential medical requirements has also reduced steadily.
- The recovery rate has risen to 89 per cent as a result of our collective actions and helped minimise the risk and lower the rate of infections.
- Although we have made remarkable progress, the coronavirus has not been eradicated and we must exercise extreme caution as the virus kills.

We must continue to be responsible.

- Government applauds the millions of South Africans who continue to do the right things daily, such as practising social distancing, wearing a mask, and washing their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

- The fight is however far from over, we are still in the midst of a deadly epidemic and we cannot simply go back to life as we once knew it.
- Our greatest challenge now and our most important task is to ensure that we do not experience a new surge in infections.
- Several countries around the world have been hit by a 'second wave' or resurgence of infections which has been more severe than the first.
- These countries have had to re-impose a hard lockdown.
- We must therefore continue to be cautious and consider the effect of our actions on others.
- Irresponsible behaviour places our elderly parents, grandparents and those who suffer from comorbidities at greater risk.
- Should you choose to meet with friends and family, visit entertainment venues, travel for leisure, or consume alcohol in restaurants, bars and taverns, you must do so responsibly.
- It is important to note that many people who have the coronavirus do not have symptoms, yet could unwittingly infect others.
- Continue to observe physical distancing and observe all safety protocols, even when visiting close family members and friends.

Play your part – download the COVID Alert App.

- All South Africans with a smartphone are encouraged to download COVID Alert South Africa mobile app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.
- The app is zero-rated and will not attract any data costs.
- The app uses Bluetooth technology to alert users when they are in close contact with any other user who has tested positive for coronavirus in the past 14 days.
- Countries using this type of app have been able to effectively manage the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Department of Health has also developed WhatsApp and SMS systems for people without smartphones to provide them with test results and alert them to any possible exposure to the virus.

Restriction on social activities and gathering are eased.

- In Alert Level 1 no person is permitted outside their place of residence between midnight and 4am apart from permitted workers.
- Gatherings will be permitted provided that the number of people do not exceed 50 per cent of the venue capacity.
- This is however subject to a maximum of 250 people for indoor gatherings and 500 people for outdoor gatherings.
- A maximum of 100 people may attend a funeral due to the higher risk of viral transmission at funerals.
- Night vigils are still not permitted.
- Exercise, recreation and entertainment venues are allowed to accommodate up to 50 per cent of their capacity.
- The sale of alcohol at retail outlets for home consumption is now permitted from Monday to Friday, from 09h00 to 17h00.
- Alcohol will be permitted for on-site consumption in licenced establishments only and with strict adherence to the curfew.
- Existing restrictions on sporting events remain in place.

South Africa is open for international travel.

- Travel into and out of South Africa will be allowed from 1 October 2020 subject to containment and mitigation measures.
- Travel may be restricted to and from certain countries that have high infection rates.
- Travellers must only use land border posts that have been operational during the lockdown, the King Shaka, OR Tambo or Cape Town International Airports.
- On arrival, travellers will need to present a negative COVID-19 test result not older than 72 hours from time of departure.
- Where a traveller has not done a COVID-19 test prior to departure, they will be required to remain in mandatory quarantine at their own cost.

- All travellers will be screened on arrival and those presenting with symptoms will be required to remain in quarantine until a repeat COVID-19 test is conducted.
- All travellers will need to download the COVID Alert South Africa mobile app.
- In preparation for the re-opening of our borders, South African missions will open for visa applications and all long-term visas will be reinstated.

Government is scaling up coronavirus testing.

- Our public health response is now focused on further reducing the transmission of the virus and preparing for any possible resurgence.
- The decline in new infections and the reduced pressure on our health facilities gives us sufficient testing capacity to expand the criteria for testing.
- We will now test all those who are admitted to hospital, outpatients with COVID symptoms and individuals who have been in close contact with confirmed cases whether or not they themselves have symptoms.
- We will also improve contact tracing through the deployment of the COVID Alert South Africa mobile phone app and the COVID Connect WhatsApp platform.
- A nationwide survey - known as a seroprevalence – will be undertaken to assess the actual levels of infection within society.
- The survey uses antibody tests to see if a person has been exposed to the coronavirus and allows scientists to estimate the extent of asymptomatic infections and immunity to better understand the transmission patterns of the virus.

It's time to build our economy.

- The move to Alert Level 1 removes many of the remaining restrictions on economic activity.
- It is therefore vital that we move with urgency to rebuild our economy, restore growth and create jobs.
- The agreement by social partners at NEDLAC on an ambitious social compact for economic recovery provides a strong foundation to rebuild our economy.
- Government is working to finalise the country's economic reconstruction and recovery plan that builds on the R500 billion economic and social relief package.
- More than 800,000 companies have benefited through the UIF wage support scheme and through the grants and loans.
- Companies have also benefited from tax relief measures worth R70 billion.
- Adjustments to the Loan Guarantee Scheme make it easier for companies of any size to access credit at low interest rates and delayed repayments for 12 months.

We continue to support the vulnerable from the impact of COVID-19.

- The special COVID-19 grants and the top-up of grants provide over R30 billion in support and benefited more than 16 million people from poor households.
- More than 4 million workers received R42 billion in wage support, helping to protect jobs while companies were not able to operate.
- The UIF benefit has been extended until the end of the national state of disaster to further support workers.
- The Solidarity Fund has supported food relief for vulnerable households, vouchers for subsistence farmers and care for survivors of gender-based violence.
- The fund which raised over R3.1 billion supported the purchase of testing equipment, medical supplies and personal protective equipment and enhanced the local manufacture of ventilators.

We are holding those involved in COVID-19 corruption to account.

- Our law enforcement agencies are making important progress in investigating all allegations of the misuse of COVID-related funds.
- The Special Investigating Unit has submitted its first interim report to the President detailing the progress on COVID-19 corruption investigations.

- The SIU is working alongside 8 other agencies in the COVID-19 fusion centre to detect, investigate and prosecute any instances of corruption.
- As part of the effort to encourage transparency and accountability, the National Treasury has published online the details of all COVID-related contracts awarded by public entities at national and provincial level.
- The Office of the Auditor-General has detected cases of possible fraud for investigation by the law enforcement agencies.
- Our anti-corruption efforts are being strengthened through providing the NPA and other law enforcement agencies with the human and financial resources needed.

We are strengthening specialised commercial crime courts, which will help expedite COVID-related cases.

I am opening the floor for our engagement on what we do, together as community-based organizations and NGOs, as we move towards a **GENERATION EQUALITY: Realizing Women's Rights for Equal Future.**

I thank you