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**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,  
LAZARUS MOKGOSI, ON THE OCCASION OF THE PROVINCIAL  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE DIALOGUE HELD AT THE EMABASSY HALL IN  
MAHIKENG, NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA**

**DATE: 06 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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**Programme Director**

**Executive Mayor of Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality**

**Executive Mayor of Mahikeng Local Municipality**

**Members of Mayoral Committee Present here**

**Acting Head of the Department of Social Development**

**Chairperson of Central Drug Authority**

**House of Traditional Leaders**

**Representatives from various organisations**

**Faith-Based Organisations**

**Government Officials from both Provincial and National Departments**

**Members of the Media**

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

First and foremost, let me take this opportunity to thank all of you including our strategic partners for making efforts out of your busy schedule to attend this provincial substance abuse dialogue.

Our gathering here today should not be a mere talkshop or an outing. It should be fruitful such that when it is concluded, we should be able to come up with implementable plans to uproot substance abuse in our communities.

Tiriso e e botlhaswa ya diritibatsi ke kgwetlho-kgolo e e re lebaneng re le puso, batsadi, ditheo tse di farologaneng le setshaba ka kakaretso.

Re tsere maikano re le Mokgatlho o o busang wa African National Congress a gore ga re kitla re ikhutsa gongwe go didimala go fitlhela bana ba rona go akaretisa le badirisi ba diritibatsi ka kakaretso ba di tlogela. Ga re kitla re lapa pelo go fitlhelela thekiso ya diritibatsi e fela. Diritibatsi di kotsi mo bathong ba rona.

The negative effects of substance and drug abuse on the socio-economic wellbeing of individuals, families and the youth is a cause for serious concern.

Young people are at risk of contracting diseases from each other through the use of needles to exchange blood through a process called “Bluetooth.”

Drugs and substances take over their lives and the elderly alike. Those who indulge in drugs tend to lose control of themselves. More often than not they get involved in criminal activities.

It is heart-wrenching that most persons with drug use disorders are graduates from tertiary institutions and have decided to indulge in various substance because of unemployment and other personal problems.

I am saying this from a wide background for obvious reasons: A week after my appointment, as a Member of the Executive Council responsible for the Department of Social Development, I visited some of the young people who smoke various drugs at a Brandford taxi rank in Mahikeng.

In my engagement with this group of young people: They indicated to me that they have nothing to do, that is why they spend most of their time on drugs.

It is time we develop a programme to keep these young people busy by providing jobs for them.

According to the report released by South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use released in 2021, North West is among the three provinces our country (Free State and Northern Cape) where alcohol was the most common primary substance of use, accounting for 39% of all admissions in respective treatment centres.

Among the 189 persons treated at three centres during this period, cannabis was the second most common primary substance of use at 36%, followed by methamphetamine at 12%.

Nyaope is gaining popularity among adolescents, with far-reaching effects on users, families, and communities.

Another survey conducted by South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) found that 15% of pupils admitted to using over-the-counter drugs to get high. The same study found that 11.5% of pupils had tried at least one drug, such as heroin, Mandrax, sugars or Tik.

It is so unfortunate, Programme Director that our beloved country has become a consumer, producer, and transit country for drugs. Socio-economic factors such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment remain key contributing elements to the increased use of drugs and the development of substance use disorders.

This is a heartrending situation that calls for the attention of all of us gathered here to work together to eradicate abuse of drugs and substances that continue to rob the future of our children.

Prevention, treatment and law enforcement authorities are crucial to reducing the sale of substances in our communities. Illicit drug trafficking inflicts violence and corruption in our communities. Law enforcement is a critical role-player and operational focus on drug dealers and organised crime will cut short the chain of drug trafficking.

It is a known fact that young people use nyaope which is found easily in our townships and villages.

We cannot allow our beloved Province and the country at large to become a paradise of drugs and a door-way for trafficking. We should fight drugs at household level and in schools.

Programme Director, it has never become easy to address drug abuse without professional assistance. To this end we have budgeted R4.2 million to enable NPOs to provide substance abuse prevention services and aftercare to persons with substance use disorders.

Furthermore, our plans for this year is to establish Local Drug Action Committees in all local municipalities for coordination and intensification of substance abuse prevention programmes which includes Siyalulama Community Outreach Programme, Festive Season Campaign and Debates on Substance Abuse in some schools.

We will also officially start to admit drug users at Taung treatment centre with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023. This is the second state-run treatment centre to be used to render services to drug users in the province.

We have also made remarkable strides towards rehabilitating those that are addicted to drugs.

Re kopa batsadi go ela bana tlhoko kwa gae le go ba batlela thuso nako e santse e le teng.

Re ikuela mo setshabeng go akaretsa dikereke le mekgatho e e farologaneng go dira gammogo le puso go lwantsha tiriso e e botlhaswa ya dritibatsi.

We require a concerted effort of all stakeholders who are policy makers, planners, and specifically implementers if we are to eradicate drug-related harms in communities.

With the commitment of other stakeholders, effective prevention, treatment, and control of drug-related problems could become a reality in the province and the country at large.

I appeal to all of you here to work together in harmony to achieve more than what has already been achieved in the fight against substance abuse and continue to intervene in the plight of persons with substance use disorders in our communities.

Lastly, I wish you fruitful and progressive deliberations during this dialogue and I hope this winning team will come up with long lasting solutions to all the problems related to substance abuse.

**I thank you.**