

SPEAKING NOTES MEC NTOMBELA AT THE OPENING OF MOALOSI ECD CENTRE IN TWEELING

Programme Director let me remind you that the objectives of Child Protection Week are to raise the profile of all issues connected with child protection, including child abuse prevention, treatment, research, education, service provision and support for our children. It is a week in which those who work in the child protection field attempt once again remind all South African citizens, government and civil society alike, that protecting children is “everyone’s business

We are going to use this week to urge the whole country, including non-governmental organisations, the media and sporting bodies to include the promotion of children’s well-being and rights in their programmes and campaigns not only this week but throughout the year.

My message for today to parents is that, Let us take extra care and ensure that children are supervised and provided with guidance at all times. Children wondering alone in shopping malls and football stadiums will be vulnerable to people with evil intentions. We will play our part as government but parents and caregivers also have to be vigilant.

As you all know, families are the corner stone of our community and primarily responsible for the care and protection of children. We want to revive in our society the long lost morals whereby children were able to enjoy their childhood without fear. Go back to the days where your child was my child and my child was your child.

Citizens, families and communities must ensure that we do not become silent partners of this disease of child abuse and neglect, and report such cases to the authorities promptly.

Our responsibility is to report such cases without delay and show our support by wearing a Green Ribbon, which is the official logo of the campaign. This symbolises protection, life and growth.

We have adopted a 365 day child protection campaign and a bouquet of programmes and services will be implemented to ensure that we provide a safe and nurturing environment for our children to develop. But such initiatives will be a futile exercise without parents and guardians committing to reduce opportunities for sexual violations by properly supervising the movements of their children. Parents need to ensure that children are always left under the supervision and care of a responsible adult.

As government: We strongly condemn the recent occurrences of child abandonment and abused. It is disturbing to note that some of these vulnerable children are exposed to such violations by their own parents who allow them to walk unsupervised for long distances to school, send them to local shops unsupervised, leave them under the care of their minor siblings and at times with neighbours whose backgrounds are unknown.

It is for this reason that the Children's Act promotes the preservation and strengthening of families so as to give effect to the constitutional rights and obligation towards children, specifically family care, parental care or appropriate alternative

The Children's Act introduces better reporting mechanisms for child abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and also put more emphasis on the plight of child headed households.

In the spirit of **Child Protection Week**, Government believes that protecting children and creating a safe and secure environment is everyone's responsibility and is achievable.

Honorable Premier, as the dedicated team of the Department of Social Development we will ensure that children are protected all the times hence we are building Early Childhood Development Centers across the province in partnership with our stakeholders

The centre we are opening today, donated by the **National Development Agency** will provide safety to more than hundred of underprivileged children around the area. Our partnership with NDA has given us hope that our children will have accesses to opportunities which were not available before.

NDA did not only build the structure but equipped it with furnishers, educational toys and recreational facilities for our children because we believe that Intellectual stimulation and development of children is very important. **We spent of R733 629.00 rands to build Moalosi ECD centre.** We hope that this Centre will serve the community well in providing a safe and healthy environment for children whilst their parents are at work.

Even though this crèche is situated in one of the economically depressed areas of our province, it is important that our children, no matter where they live, reap the fruits of our liberation. The investment

that we commit in their development has long term implications on them as productive and responsible citizens.

This calls for commitment from all us because this is not the sole responsibility of government. Parents, teachers, the community, including the religious sector, to have a role to play in ensuring that the centre does not become a target for thugs. Let us protect our properties because the stage at which children enter the phase of Early Childhood Development is very crucial in their intellectual and social development.

Early Childhood Development should never be reduced to children, eating, playing and sleeping. Appropriate programs that prepare them for school should be part of their daily activities.

Let us leave her with a common understanding that, it is our responsibility to ensure that our children grow up being healthy children in order to be productive South Africans!

I want to take this opportunity to National Development Agency for having collaborated with us in delivering the Early Childhood Development Centre in Tweeling

In closing- As we celebrate Child Protection Week let us all remember that “Safety and security of our children don’t just happen, they are result of collective and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable in our society, a life of free violence and fear” – Dr Nelson Mandela.

Let us all wear **A GREEN RIBBON** as a symbol of accepting the obligation of protecting children