



**SPEECH BY THE MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, THE  
HONOURABLE MS. A.M. TSOPO AT THE CELEBRATION OF  
INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT  
TRAFFICKING, 26 JUNE 2008**

Programme Director

Honourable Executive Mayor of Mangaung, Councillor Getrude Mothupi

Councillors present here today

Pastor Mokoena

Heads of Departments and Government officials

The Chairperson of the Community Policing Forum, Mr. Akata

Fellow colleagues in the NPO Sector

The young persons

Distinguished guests

## INTRODUCTION

In its drug awareness fact file, the South African Police Services makes a distinction between the legal and illegal drugs that exists. Alcohol and caffeine are classified as the legal drugs whereas drugs such as dagga, heroin, ecstasy, mandrax and cocaine are illegal. The common factor amongst all these drugs, either legal or illegal, is that they are addictive and deadly. They are also used by our children, brothers, sisters and in some instances by our parents. This is unfortunately the reality that we face. The young people are unfortunately the most vulnerable and most targeted by the drug dealers. Programme Director, it is most unfortunate that one of the legal drugs, alcohol, is the immediate threat to the present generation. The Central Drug Authority also has warned the young people that starting to drink at an early age may lead to more alcohol dependence over time and even more, death. Ladies and gentlemen, it is



against this background that we have gathered here today to commemorate and celebrate the International Day Against Substance and Illicit Trafficking.

This day is celebrated annually on 26<sup>th</sup> of June as per the General Assembly Political Declaration and this year's theme is a question, "Do drugs control your life?" Programme Director, this is a question that we must all ask ourselves when we leave here today but further resolve on how are we going to deal with the drugs that do not only control our sister's and brother's lives but also our communities' lives.

## THE STATUS QUO

The World Drug Report has reported in 2007 that the appropriate number of drug users in South Africa is more than 200 000. The report also indicates a considerable number of abuse of over the counter and prescription medicines. The economic implications on the cost of alcohol are also devastating. The research has demonstrated that an estimated economic cost of alcohol abuse stands between R8, 7 and R17, 4 billion per year. Unfortunately, the poorest of the poor are the ones who suffer the most.

Whereas it is not easy to determine consumption and use of the illegal drugs due to them not being readily available like alcohol is, the access to alcohol is a worrying factor. The abundance and availability of the taverns in our communities is a proof enough on how easily accessible alcohol is to our communities.

I am definitely sure that you will agree with me when I say there are more shebeens and taverns than there are Churches in our communities.



The Central Drug Authority has further stated that there is evidence that 33% of girls in grade 11 consume alcohol while the comparative figure is 48% for boys in the same grade. The frightening reality is that children who are drinking alcohol by grade 7 are more likely to report academic problems and delinquent behaviour. The long term effect is, by young adulthood, these children will develop employment problems, other substance abuse, criminal and violent behaviour. In his media statement on Substance Abuse on 02 May 2008, the Honourable Minister of Social Development, Dr. Skweyiya has re-emphasised this matter by saying,

“Substance and Drug Abuse is the major contributor to crime, poverty, reduced production, unemployment, dysfunctional family life, the escalation of chronic diseases such as HIV, AIDS as well as injury and premature death”.

This assertion by the Minister clearly indicates that alcohol and substance abuse has direct causal factors of other social and economic ills.

Again, I am definitely sure that you will agree with me when I say violent crimes such as stabbing and murder happen more in shebeens and taverns than in Churches or anywhere else in our communities. Ladies and gentlemen, the onus to teach and nurture our children into becoming responsible and moral adults rests with us.

One of the progressive programmes that we have adopted in our interventions, especially targeting the youth and children is the “Ke Moja, no thanks I’m fine without drugs” campaign. The programme was started in 2005 as a service to provide prevention of drug and substance abuse for both the out of school and school going young people between the ages of 10 and 18 years. This programme is implemented in close partnership with the Department of Education for the school going youth and with the Community Based Organizations for the out of school youth. This campaign



has made major strides and we have reached 82 schools, 30 000 school-going children and 320 trainers were trained on “Ke Moja, no thanks I’m fine without drugs” in 2007/2008 in the Free State. I must also indicate that the implementation of “Ke Moja, no thanks I’m fine without drugs” campaign is linked with the “Tiisa Thuto” programme, which is executed in partnership with the Department of Education, the Department of Safety, Security and Liaison and Business South Africa targeting the schools that are mostly affected by crime which is a project called safer school. We will be intensifying all our campaigns through collaborated effort and in line with both the National and Provincial Drug Master Plans.

#### MINI DRUG MASTER PLAN

Programme Director, I am very pleased to indicate that the government is working tirelessly in partnership with the civil society to address the challenges experienced because of substance abuse. Yes, the fight against substance abuse cannot be a one person show, otherwise we will lose this battle hence our approach is inter-sectoral and integrated. The Department of Social Development, as a lead Department in reducing the legal and illegal drugs, has a responsibility of ensuring that there is proper coordination and integration in the fight against alcohol and substance abuse. Our efforts and programme of action, us all as the stakeholders, will be guided by the Provincial Mini Drug Master Plan. The Provincial Plan is aligned with the National Drug Master Plan which was approved in November 2006 by the National Minister of Social Development.

This Provincial plan was developed through a consultative process that included all stakeholders and each stakeholder knows their responsibilities on the plan. Once more, I want to appreciate the efforts of the Free State Provincial Substance Abuse Forum for the development and finalisation of the Provincial plan. The forum consists



of the representatives of the government Departments, academic institutions and the Not for Profit Organizations.

Programme Director, it is my honour to announce that today we are also launching the Free State Mini Drug Master Plan and it is not by coincidence that the launch takes place the same day as we are commemorating and celebrating the International Day Against Substance and Illicit Trafficking but it is by intention. It is also with excitement to further announce that the Master Plan was approved by the Free State Executive Council on its Cabinet meeting held on 28 May 2008. We are thus equally declaring that the time for planning is over and it is now the time for action. The pledge that was also signed earlier today must serve as our commitment to the contribution of making our communities drug free, not only on paper but by our conduct as well.

We hope that when we commemorate and celebrate this day in 2009, we will be reporting the impact and the difference that we have made because of the guidance provided by the Provincial plan. I must however emphasise that the work on drug and substance abuse is not only the responsibility of government and the Not for Profit Organizations, but it the responsibility of the entire community, irrespective whether they are directly or indirectly users or affected by the substance abuse and drugs.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, I must indicate that the government is currently busy with the processing of the Prevention of and Treatment of Substance Abuse Bill which will replace the old Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependency Act of 1992. This process was necessitated by the fact that, as the Honourable Minister has rightly stated, “The 1992 Act has become outdated and is not responsive to current challenges. Amongst other



things, the Act focuses primarily on institutional treatment, provides very little provision for prevention, community based and out-patient services; and treatment services are not equally available and accessible to all citizens”. The approach of the government should therefore be viewed as prevention is better than cure and community based treatment is more effective and efficient than institutionalization.

This approach does not deviate from our African indigenous principle that “it takes the whole village to raise a child”. I am therefore making a call that it must also take the whole village to prevent, care and treat substance and alcohol abuse. If this does happen, we will all declare that “Drugs do not control my life”.

To all the young persons present here today, do not do drugs, they are a “no go area” and concentrate on your education to become better, responsible adults and future leaders.

To the elders present here today, I want to tell you that it is illegal for you to send young children to buy cigarettes and alcohol for you. I am also urging the South African Police Services not to tolerate instances of children who are sent to buy drugs and substances by the elders. Those elders responsible must be brought to book for their actions. This practice is not only illegal but is also one of the worst but ignored forms of child abuse. Please also do report your neighbours to the authorities if you know or suspect that they are involved in this practise.

I repeat, “It takes the whole village to raise a child”.

I thank you and God Bless.