

Media Statement

28 April 2009

Health department and striking doctors reach agreement to halt illegal strike

The Department of Health and the SA Medical Association delegation which included the representatives of striking doctors reached an agreement in Pretoria this evening for the immediate halting of the illegal strike action that has been taking place in various hospitals in the country.

The strike, first reported approximately two (2) weeks ago has seen health care compromised in various part of the country to the leading to the recent deployment of the South African Military Health Services medical personnel in some hospitals.

The parties recommitted themselves to the negotiation process currently underway in the Bargaining Chamber. The Department of Health and SAMA would like to see urgent progress towards the implementation of the Occupation Specific Dispensation (OSD) for doctors, dentists, pharmacists and emergency medical services personnel

The Department has agreed to withdraw all dismissals and replace them with final written warnings for involvement in an unprotected illegal strike. However, the No Work No Pay principle will apply as it does in all strike actions.

The doctors have agreed to return to work and to ensure that they will follow proper channels to address problems that they encounter.

"The Department of Health is relieved that the strike action is finally coming to an end. We have been very concerned as a Department that the strike undermined our efforts to provide health care to our patients", said Health Director General Thami Mseleku.

The striking doctors expressed relief that all matters they have raised will be attended to thus allowing them to return to work.

In expressing his view on the deal, the South African Medical Association (SAMA) chairperson Prof Mkhululi Lukhele expressed his happiness on the agreement. "As SAMA we can only be happy that this episode is coming to an end. The strike caused much distress to the profession and the public who depend on our services", said Lukhele.

The parties have committed themselves to allow the negotiation process to continue unhindered and expressed confidence in it delivering the outcomes in due course.

The Department and the doctors appreciate the facilitation provided by the ANC NEC Sub-committee on Education and Health.

For more information please contact Fidel Hadebe on 079 517-3333 and Dr Mpho Mohlala (Representative of striking doctors) on 083 377 6486 or Prof Mkhululi Lukhele (SAMA) on 082 492 8717.

Issued by Department of Health and SAMA

Ends