

REMARKS BY KZN HEALTH MEC Ms NOMAGUGU SIMELANE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY, MADADENI HOSPITAL, 10 OCTOBER 2023

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Today, we gather here at Madadeni Hospital on this very important occasion, to commemorate World Mental Health Day, and to highlight and emphasise the critical importance of addressing mental health issues.

For far too long, mental health has not been receiving the kind of attention that it warrants – especially, given that it is such a common challenge in our society. In fact, according to the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), up to one in three South Africans suffer from some or other mental illness, while many have challenges with accessing the requisite level of care.

So, this should be a day when we not only seek to raise awareness about Mental Health, but also an opportunity to commit ourselves to actively advocating for the mental well-being of all our citizens, as well as improved access to care.

WHY PLACING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE SPOTLIGHT IS IMPORTANT:

As I've indicated KwaZulu-Natal, like many other provinces, faces a high prevalence of mental health issues.

Mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder are quite prevalent, and conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder affect many individuals and their families.

Alcohol and drug abuse are some of the risk factors that directly lead to the development of a number of substance-induced mental disorders, which can trigger symptoms of anxiety, depression, psychosis, and other mental health conditions in a person.

Even drugs which some many consider “harmless” or “fashionable,” such as dagga – and others that are more harmful and highly addictive, such as cocaine, “whoonga” and “intashi” – are all known to have a devastating effect on a person’s mental health.

Ngakho-ke, sithi Phansi Ngensangu, Phansi!!!
Phansi Nge-Cocaine, Phansi!!!,
Phensi nge-Whoonga neNtashi Phansi!!!”

Akuphele ukukhuluma ngezidakamizwa engathi ziyimfashini noma ziyinto enhle, ngoba ziwumbulalazwe!!!

Amadolobha ethu agcwele abantu ababizwa ngamaphara namhlanje, kungenxa yezidakamizwa.

Abomthetho sithi abaqinise isandla babophe bonke abantu abaletha izidakamizwa ezweni lethu, kanye nalabo abazakhayo.

MENTAL ILLNESS IS NOT A CHOICE:

We all need to remember that mental illness is not a choice, nor is it a reflection of a person's character.

It is a medical condition that requires support, care, and treatment.

Individuals who are psychotic should never be subjected to derogatory names or stigmatization.

If we call them names... Uma sithi “bayahlanya”, baya-“ntringa” noma bano-“mdikheyi” abantu abagula ngokomqondo, asisoze sayinqoba lempi esibhekene nayo.

Let us all support those who suffer from mental illness, and treat them with the level of respect and dignity that they deserve as human beings.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MINISTER:

With those few words, let me take this opportunity and introduce our Honourable Minister...

The honourable Dr Joe Phaahla, a Member of Parliament representing the ANC, holds a Bachelor of Medicine and a Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (previously University of Natal), which he attained in 1983.

He practiced as a medical practitioner at various hospitals in KZN (Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital), Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo until April 1994.

Before the unbanning of ANC in 1990, he served in leadership positions in various mass democratic movement structures, including in the NEC of the United Democratic Front (UDF).

He became the first MEC for Health and Social Development in Limpopo Province after the first democratic elections in 1994, and later served as MEC for various departments.

Between May 2014 and August 2021, Dr Phaahla served as the Deputy Minister of Health.

He was appointed Minister of Health on 5 August 2021, and we are delighted to have him in our midst.

Over to you, Minister.