

## **MINISTER GWEDE MANTASHE'S SPEECH FOR THE MASOYISE HEALTH PROGRAMME SEMINAR. (15 October 2020)**

Dr Zweli Mkhize, Minister of Health of the Republic of South Africa.

Dr Lucica Ditiu, Executive Director of the Stop TB Partnership.

Ms Alette van Leur, Director, Sectoral Policies Department, ILO (Geneva)

Dr Shannon Hader, Deputy Executive Director - Programme, UNAIDS.

Mr Vusi Mabena, Executive Secretary, MIASA.

Dr Marijke Wijnroks, Chief of Staff, Global Fund.

Join Ms Zanele Matlala - Vice President, Minerals Council South Africa & Chair, Masoyise Health Programme.

Mr Paliani Chinguwo, Programme Officer, research, and information, SATUCC

Dr Owen Kaluwa, Resident Representative, WHO (South Africa)

Thank you all – key-note-speakers and panellists as well as active participants – you have done an outstanding job sharing with us your valuable knowledge, insight, and experiences on how to approach the reprioritization of TB, HIV, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the era of COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you very much.

I would also like to thank the Minerals Council South Africa, for organising this virtual webinar which discussed the hard and important topics related to COVID-19, and how it impacts on individuals with TB, HIV and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

I appreciate your excellent presentations delivered in today's discussions, for capturing the essence and translating it into various recommendations on how to approach the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to TB, HIV, NCD which are some of the key conditions in mining that render most of our mine workers vulnerable and suffer severe complications of COVID-19.

Over the past months we have seen the disruption of fundamental health care due to COVID-19, and as a new disease with limited information regarding individual risk

factors for an infected person with complications and needing higher levels of medical intervention.

The Department (DMRE) has been assessing this outbreak around the clock and we are deeply concerned both by the levels of spread and severity, however there has been a decline in the number of new cases as we observed during winter months. We are all concerned about the second wave as we all do not know how it will affect us.

As we know that COVID-19 has been characterized as a pandemic, a word that cannot be used lightly or carelessly. It can cause unreasonable fear, or unjustified acceptance that the fight is over, leading to unnecessary suffering and death.

It is for these reasons that through Mine Health and Safety Council developed the Guiding Principles on Prevention and Management of COVID-19 in the South African Mining Industry, through collaboration of tripartite stakeholders i.e. State, Organised labour and Organised business. The decision was taken to issue a communique on guiding principles with regards to preparedness, mitigation, and management of COVID-19 exposure. This was essential as the South African Mining Industry (SAMI) is labour intensive with congregate settings and has both underground and surface operations.

The Guiding Principles on Prevention and Management of COVID-19 issuance was followed by the development of a Mandatory Guideline on Prevention, Mitigation and Management of COVID-19 outbreak.

My appreciation goes to internationally and nationally recognised experts that participated in this seminar for their views and advise to our country. We hope to leverage on many ideas that they have put forth in relation to reprioritizing TB, HIV and NCDs in the era of COVID-19,

I am confident, the recommendations derived from this seminar will be a vital input into the work of the Mining TB and HIV Committee (MITHAC) within the Mine Health and Safety Council. Our responsibility is to carry these recommendations resolutely forward and ensure that they are placed high up on agenda of Occupational Health

Programme in the South African Mining Industry (SAMI) – especially in the coming six months.

I hope that you all will stay committed and work for the prospect that soon we find a vaccine for COVID-19.

I also hope that you will work actively to ensure that the outcome document from the Masoyise Health Programme seminar will emphasize employee's healthcare empowerment as a key area for accelerated action.

Thank you very much for guiding us safely through this ambitious and compact Masoyise Health Seminar.

Thank you