

**Keynote Address by the Deputy Minister of Social Development, Mr Ganief Hendricks, MP on the occasion of the launch of the Senior Women Football Club.**

**Province: Western Cape, Thornton**

**Topic: *Role of Seniors in Keeping Fit and Uniting Diverse Communities***

**Date: Sunday 17 November 2024**

ASSALAAMU ALAIKUM, GOOD AFTERNOON, MOLWENI, GOEIE MIDDAG, NAMASTE.....

Ward Councillor Riad Davids,

Programme Director, Mrs Yasmina Johnson the Chairperson of the Senior Women Football Club,

Respected seniors, women of the Senior Women Football Club, supporters' and everyone present.

It is indeed a great pleasure to honor the invitation from the 'Senior Women Football Club' to be part of your launch. The topic: "Role of Seniors in Keeping Fit and Uniting Diverse Communities" are very relevant as it gives a clear message that 'Seniors' continues to play important roles in society; they are an extension of the communities' identity and the extended part of their familial cum communal connection: whether it is within the sporting sector and in other social circles, all of these add value and concretely contribute to bringing diverse communities together!

In our religious and cultural communities, we are taught not only to respect our parents but to serving them; this is considered a noble duty. Nay, doing so is an honor and a blessing; our responses to their needs and wants should be viewed as part of our spiritual growth. So, the caring for our Seniors should be with limitless compassion and committed support.

When I received this invitation, my program was already fully booked; but because this event is about our Seniors, I instructed my office to make sure that I should be here today. Though I might be seen to be in 'your age category', I feel I am much younger than all of you! However, being with you today is to identify with you and support you in your endeavors to keep fit and healthy; this is no easy task, I am sure; but it helps us psychologically, emotionally, and sociologically.

All of this implies that I, like you, am concerned about your health and mental status considering the variety of health challenges that our communities encounter during the current period; an era during which we witnessed the escalation of violence against the vulnerable elders; of late, we have read about how they are cruelly mistreated and disgustingly disrespected. I feel ashamed at the unkind treatment meted out against our elders and this angers me and my team. This ministry of mine thus intends to positively change since these acts hurt us all very deeply. For that reason, I encourage my ministry to give its support for all of you and since you are in the sporting arena, I would want your sector to be given the support in whichever way possible.

In case you not fully aware, be informed that South Africa has an 'Older Persons Bill'; a Bill that safeguards the rights and welfare of older persons. This bill, which has been strongly supported by the Human Rights Commission, is based on providing a secure and dignified retirement of older persons. The Department of Social Development (DSD) has been fully aware of the disturbing trends of neglect and abuse of older person, not only by family members, but in care facilities and by caregivers; a point that I stressed earlier. For the record, the Bill has been amended to legislate stringent standards and oversight for old age homes; the idea is to prevent amongst others, any forms of mishandling of older persons.

Now, what I see here in this hall today, are several seniors who are 'young at heart' and on top of it, very sporty too! Physical activity has many health benefits for seniors. According to health reports, non-contact sports are safer for seniors, but the members of the Senior Women Football Club prove them to be wrong!

As the golden years catch up, it is important to stay active and maintain a healthy lifestyle physically and mentally. Taking part in sports not only offers physical benefits but also contributes to one's mental and social well-being. Apart from the essential and support services provided for seniors, there is Social and Community Support as well. The Community centers throughout the country offer a wide range of activities for seniors which include social events, fitness classes, and educational workshops. These centers provide opportunities for social engagement and physical activity.

I hope that this football club will reach out to the programs offered by the Department (that is, DSD). I – on behalf of DSD - wish your club all the best; and my hope and desire is that grows stronger in the years ahead and that it should reach a competitive level similar to what the nation witnessed when they followed our women's South Africa's Banyana Banyana team not too long ago. So, I wish you well and all the best!

**end**

