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NAPTOSA NATIONAL COUNCIL: PRESIDENT'S OPENING ADDRESS

Counsellors to NAPTOSA's 11th National Council Meeting on 17 October 2020 were treated, in the opening address of the President, Mr Nkosipendule Ntantala, under the Council theme of **“Not a New Norm, but a Better Norm”** to a focussed and insightful analysis of issues related to the union, education and society.

On the societal front, the President highlighted the COVID-19 pandemic and called on everyone not to become complacent, but to continue observing the non- pharmaceutical practices and protocols so that a resurgence of infections is avoided.

Mr Ntantala expressed extreme concern for the effects that Gender-based Violence (GBV), general violence and civil unrest are having on the fabric of society as it poses a serious threat to social cohesion, the spirit of reconciliation and racial tolerance in our country. He criticized entities that are fueling racial intolerance through their populist stances and called on NAPTOSA members to do even more to place the focus on our diversity and social cohesion as an example for these entities to emulate.

The demoralizing effect of corruption on those who wish to do good was pointed out, especially the latest abhorrent acts during the pandemic when the lives of citizens were compromised for financial gain. “Leaders have turned against their people because of selfish interests”, said Mr Ntantala. He also condemned groupings that parade in defense of alleged culprits when law enforcement agencies act against them.

While the quality of the PPEs provided to schools, the ability of government to supply water to schools, the ability of government to improve ablution facilities in schools and the ability of government to continuously replenish the PPEs during the course of the pandemic, were acknowledged as problems areas, the President commended the ability of NAPTOSA to utilize the “bad” situation of the pandemic to pressurize education departments into attending to the infrastructure defects in schools and to fight for the safety and health of our members and learners. This is the way to achieve “a better norm”.

The President called for a reduction and elimination of inequalities in education through *inter alia* the continued improvement in facilities and the adequate supply of quality LTSM to all schools. He said, “We want Quality schools, Quality Learning and Teaching resources for Quality Education”. He beckoned NAPTOSA to be vigilant in ensuring that money allocated to education is used productively and gainfully, especially the funding provided for the contracting of Education and Other Assistants, as recently announced.

With a view to the effects of School-related Gender-based Violence (SRGBV), GBV and general violence on learners, teachers and education support personnel, the President urged the extension of psychosocial services to schools to not only assist the victims, but to also counsel the perpetrators.

Remaining with this theme, and turning his attention to NAPTOSA, the President praised the work of our SRGBV national core team and encouraged all members to participate in the fight against SRGBV and GBV in general.

As far as teacher development is concerned, the important roles of NAPTOSA’s Professional Development Institute and the Professional Matters Portfolio Committee were pointed out and the union urged to agitate more for the reconfiguration of teacher development programmes and teacher education by both the DBE and the DHET. The President appealed for the empowerment of teachers to excel in their trade “...because we seek to transform the lives of the children; because we seek to transform our communities; because we seek to produce a new and a better caliber and quality of leader; because we know we will only preserve and sustain our world when we have properly taught children”.

The President also pointed out the critical court case awaiting NAPTOSA on the salary dispute, which goes beyond the issue of the non-implementation of the 3rd leg of the three year salary agreement to the very core of preserving the right to collective bargaining. “We cannot allow the employer to ride rough-shod over legislation and thereby trample on the rights of workers”, he said.

Mr Ntantala paid tribute to colleagues who succumbed to COVID-19 while in the line of duty and conveyed his condolences to their families.

In closing he urged NAPTOSA to refresh the commitment to lead and serve with integrity, honesty, and dignity.

BASIL MANUEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR