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Statement on the Safe Schools Protocol

NAPTOSA welcomes the signing of the *Safe Schools Protocol* by the Minister of Basic Education and the Minister of Police. This is a critical and timely intervention aimed at addressing the deeply rooted social ills that have infiltrated our schools – particularly learner-on-learner violence, learner-on-teacher aggression, drug abuse, and gangsterism. For far too long, our educators and education support personnel have been expected to respond to incidents of violence and criminal behaviour without the appropriate training or protection.

While NAPTOSA acknowledges that this is not a new intervention, we commend the **renewed commitment** to restoring order, safety, and dignity in our learning environments. We are especially encouraged by the Minister's strong message that **rude and violent behaviour will no longer be tolerated**. This signals a long-overdue shift toward accountability and decisive action.

We have, however, learned from experience that protocols alone are not enough. To make a real difference, adequate resourcing is essential. This includes more trained police officers, assigned specifically to respond swiftly to school-based incidents. Timely response can be the difference between de-escalation and tragedy.

School safety must involve the entire community. It cannot succeed without the buy-in of School Governing Bodies, every parent in the school community, community leaders, and local businesses. Safety is a shared responsibility – one that must extend beyond the school fence.

School leadership will also require consistent support and capacity-building to ensure that safety measures are implemented effectively at ground level.

The seven key focus areas of the Safe Schools Protocol are well aligned with NAPTOSA's long-standing calls for a collaborative and structured approach to school safety:

- 1. Strengthened Collaboration:** We support the formalisation of direct links between schools and their nearest police stations. Faster response times and proactive policing interventions are essential for curbing violence and ensuring the safety of both learners and staff.

2. **School Safety Committees:** NAPTOSA welcomes the establishment of safety committees that bring together the police, teachers, and school governing bodies. These committees must be empowered to make decisions and take swift action to prevent and address threats to safety.
3. **School-Based Crime Prevention Programs:** We believe structured programs, tackling gender-based violence, gangsterism, bullying, drug abuse, and the possession of weapons are urgently needed. Prevention must be as strong a focus as reaction.
4. **Increased Police Visibility:** NAPTOSA has long advocated for more visible policing, particularly around high-risk schools during opening and closing times. This is not only a deterrent but a much-needed show of support for teachers who often feel abandoned in violent situations.
5. **Compliance with Laws:** We support stronger enforcement of regulations, governing liquor outlets near schools and enhanced vetting of all school staff. Schools must be safe spaces free from external enablers of violence and substance abuse.
6. **Searches and Seizures:** When conducted lawfully and respectfully, searches and seizures, in line with the *South African Schools Act*, are a necessary tool to remove illegal substances and dangerous weapons from school premises.
7. **Reporting Systems:** NAPTOSA fully endorses the establishment of robust reporting systems at all levels. Only through accurate, real-time data can we effectively monitor school-based crime and act decisively.

This **revived protocol** signals a renewed commitment to dismantling the culture of fear and violence that has taken root in too many of our schools. But we must ensure that this time, it is enforced with urgency, consistency, and sustained support.

This initiative reinforces the long-held truth that school safety cannot rest solely on the shoulders of educators – it is a collective responsibility. Through our “**Safe Schools = Safe Nation**” campaign, NAPTOSA continues to raise awareness and mobilize communities around the need for safe, supportive learning environments. We call on **parents, community members, and local businesses** to become active partners in this mission. Together, we must protect our schools – our children’s futures, and our nation’s hope.

Safe schools are not a luxury – they are a right! Let us work together to return our schools to places of learning, growth, and peace.

Mr BL Manuel

Executive Director