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STATEMENT ON NAPTOSA'S 8th ELECTIVE CONGRESS

NAPTOSA successfully held its 8th elective **National Congress in Johannesburg from 4–5 November**, under the theme **“Believing, Planning, Caring and Fighting.”** The Congress concluded with the re-election of the national leaders – **Mr. Thabo Manne as President, Mr. Nkosiphendule Ntantala as Deputy President, and Mrs. Rene Marncce as Vice President** – who will carry forward the resolutions and spirit of this Congress with integrity, courage, and dedication to the profession.

As the Union's **highest decision-making body**, the Congress brought together delegates from all provinces to reflect, deliberate, and adopt resolutions on a wide range of issues affecting the education sector, the teaching profession, and the broader well-being of learners, educators and Education Support Personnel (ESP).

At first, our theme – *Believing, Planning, Caring, and Fighting* – guided robust discussions and reaffirmed NAPTOSA's commitment to hope, strategic action, compassion, and unwavering advocacy for teachers' rights and quality education.

A major topic of concern was the **impact of austerity measures** on the education system. Delegates highlighted how budget cuts continue to **undermine teaching and learning conditions, limit school resources, and erode teacher well-being**. The Congress noted with alarm the **high rate of teacher resignations**, particularly in the **Western Cape**, citing burnout, poor working conditions, and lack of adequate support as contributing factors.

Teacher and learner mental health challenges, along with the persistent issue of **School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV)**, were key focus areas, with delegates emphasising the urgent need for **comprehensive psychosocial support systems** within schools. **Child pregnancy, the protection of children, and the duty of care** and responsibility of teachers and education support personnel were also discussed. **Infrastructure backlogs and unsafe learning environments** were identified as ongoing barriers to quality education, and NAPTOSA reaffirmed its call for improved facilities, particularly in rural and township schools.

Congress also examined the **Grade R sector**, reflecting on the recent **collective agreement** and the **compulsory inclusion of Grade R** in the formal schooling system. While welcoming the integration, delegates raised serious concerns about the **implementation challenges**, including inadequate training, **unclear conditions of service, and insufficient infrastructure to support this critical foundation phase.**

The **curriculum review process** was another area of focus, with congress calling for meaningful consultation with teachers to ensure that curriculum changes enhance learning outcomes rather than increase administrative burdens.

TVET Colleges and the challenges related to the **Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)** implementation featured prominently in discussions. Delegates demanded that the **Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)** urgently address these shortcomings, **review TVET salary scales**, and ensure **campus-based allocation of support staff** to improve service delivery and support for educators.

In addition, Congress **resolved to call upon the Ministers of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training** to urgently **develop and issue a national directive or policy, in consultation with the unions, on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education**, noting the **rapid and often irresponsible increase in AI use** by learners and students across all education levels.

The plight of **Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) Schools** received heartfelt attention. Congress condemned the ongoing **neglect of South Africa's most vulnerable children** and resolved to work closely with the **Department of Basic Education (DBE)** to **revisit and revise the worker-to-learner ratios** in hostels for **severely intellectually disabled (SID) learners** – moving from the current **1:40 ratio** to a more appropriate **1:20 ratio**. Congress further resolved that the **DBE must appoint only suitably qualified personnel** in the LSEN sector to ensure proper care, safety, and educational support for these learners.

Delegates engaged in a discussion on the importance of **teachers' professional appearance**. The intention was not to propose a uniform for teachers, but to emphasise the need for a professional dress code, as educators serve as role models and enforcers of learners' uniform standards.

NAPTOSA extends heartfelt appreciation to all delegates, observers, and partners who made the 8th National Congress a success. Guided by the principles of *Believing, Planning, Caring, and Fighting*, NAPTOSA reaffirms its unwavering commitment to defend teachers' and Education Support Personnel rights, advance quality public education, and ensure that every learner in South Africa receives the support and opportunity they deserve.

Mr BL Manuel

Executive Director