

**SPEECH OF THE FREE STATE MEC FOR SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, MR D
A M KGOHULE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE PROVINCIAL DISABILITY GAMES, SASOLBURG**

4 June 2011

Programme director
Honourable Minister, Mr Fikile Mbalula
Colleagues
Honoured guests
Ladies and gentlemen
Comrades

It gives me great pleasure to be afforded the opportunity to address you here today. I wish to thank those who have worked so hard to ensure that our province hosts the first ever Disability Games. In deed you vision and commitment towards this project should be commended.

Let me also take this opportunity to appreciate the presence of all the 679 athletes that will be part of this tournament. We are proud of your dedication and display of sportsmanship despite the physical challenges that you are faced with. Your resilience and sacrifice as differently abled athletes should serve as an inspiration to others in our society to look past their challenges and to confront whatever situation they face head on.

Sport in our country has been a catalyst for social cohesion since the advent of democracy. The successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup is a case in point. It is therefore important that we collectively identify the problem areas in our society that impact negatively on the development of sport, and that we put in place strategies to resuscitate sport in our different communities. It is also critical to note that sport is also for those with disabilities.

Our disabled athletes, at national level, have set new standards. We need to take advantage of many benefits that physical education and sport can give to children with disabilities so that they can overcome the stigma of disability and prove their worth in whatever way they can.

We should recognise and emphasise the crucial role of sport and physical education in the lives and development of women and girls. We should sturdily encourage their participation and success.

We have a responsibility to provide disabled athletes with the opportunities to participate in sport, to provide the facilities and equipment, and to provide their coaches and mentors with the necessary skills to facilitate the successful implementation of our disabled sport programme.

Ladies and gentlemen: it is imperative that we emphasise the role played by sport in the intellectual development of any individual and, the subsequent advantages it has in his or her personal growth. I am impressed by the the fact that various sporting codes will be part of this tournament. While this is the first ever Provincial People with Disability Games tournament, the department has and will continue to prioritise disability games as a platform to give an opportunity to People with Disabilities to actively take part in sport. This has happened in the past through providing support during various sport tournaments in which People with Disabilities participated. This support also included provision of sport equipment for various disability games codes.

While we recognise that the provision of sport equipment and infrastructure is of paramount importance, we also believe it is necessary to focus firmly on the management and administration of sport and recreation. The establishment of the Free State Sport Confederation is geared towards this goal of ensuring proper management and administration of various sporting codes at al levels in the

province.

Leadership is necessary and quality leadership has to be provided to give direction and ensure unity of purpose in any aspect of life. Let me assure you that my department will work together with all stakeholders that represent the interests of sports for disabled persons.

We envisage a situation where some of the disabled athletes from our province can represent our country in the Para-Olympics in the future.

I wish all participants in this tournament the best of luck. May all of you uphold the spirit of sportsmanship and friendship.

I thank you.