

## MEDIA ADVISORY

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Issued by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities  
Attention: Journalists and News Editors  
Pretoria, 21 March 2024

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### MINISTER NKOSAZANA DLAMINI ZUMA CALLS ON SOUTH AFRICANS TO OBSERVE INTERNATIONAL DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS DAY.

**PRETORIA:** The Ministry in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, observes International Down Syndrome Awareness Day on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2024. Down syndrome is a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement that has always been a part of the human condition, it exists in all regions across the globe and commonly results in variable effects on learning styles, physical characteristics, or health.

According to the Down Syndrome South Africa (DSSA) Organization, Down Syndrome (DS) affects about 1 in 500 births in South Africa. This means that approximately 1 in every 600 children is born with Down Syndrome, which is a high incidence rate.

The Observation of International Down Syndrome Awareness Day on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2024 is concurrent with the commemoration of Human Rights Day. The Government is calling on South Africans to observe the day in line with the call made by the Bill of Rights that says, *“The right to life is the most basic, the most fundamental, the most primordial and supreme right which human beings are entitled to have and without which the protection of all other human rights becomes either meaningless or less effective”*. said, Minister Dlamini Zuma.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa protects persons with disabilities from discrimination. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act also prohibits unfair discrimination against persons with disabilities. Protecting and promoting

the human rights of persons with disabilities is an underlying principle in all the Articles of the UNCRPD. Notably, Article 4 unambiguously commits States Parties to ensure and promote the full realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind, based on disability, and to protect all persons against violation of their human rights.

There are still many misconceptions about Down syndrome and those who have it. Observing the day will dispel some of the common myths about Down syndrome, including one that says children with Down syndrome are born to older parents. We call on stakeholders and role-players to work together and bring about an attitudinal shift that will provide clarity to some of the myths.

Persons with disabilities have the right to equal opportunities in all areas of life and have the right to be protected from exploitation and abusive or degrading treatment, and have the right to reasonable accommodation and environmental accessibility in the workplace, right to live in a barrier-free environment and participate in community life concluded Minister Dlamini Zuma.

**ENDS**

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***Issued by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities in partnership with the Department of Defence***

