

10 July 2020

## **COUNCIL OF EDUCATION MINISTERS CONSIDER STRONG ACTION AGAINST ONGOING DISRUPTIONS OF SCHOOLS BY INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZED BODIES**

The Council of Education Ministers (CEM), led by the Minister of Basic Education; Mrs. Angie Motshekga held a meeting early this morning. The meeting discussed developments recorded since the second cohort of learners returned to school around the country on the 6 July 2020.

CEM noted that schooling is indeed resuming with good progress, the learners were received well and many schools have made a concerted effort to prepare adequate sanitation, health and safety measures to welcome the learners back.

The CEM noted with disappointment and dismay ongoing sporadic attempts by political and civic organisations to disrupt learning at some schools around the country.

These organizations have threatened teachers and learners, others have gone to court and failed to stop the school reopening and now are bent on resorting to threats and disruptions to achieve their intended goals.

CEM appeals to all aggrieved political and civic organisations to rather engage with their political counterparts and authorities at their usual platforms.

These platforms are appropriate avenues to register their concerns and complaints and not our centres of learning and development. The unfolding political ballgame does not belong in schools.

CEM said it was regrettable that leaders would choose schools as a theatre of political posturing and muscle-flashing while the Department of Basic Education is working on creating a safe environment for learning and teaching under COVID-19.

“Failure to desist from these regrettable acts will leave us no choice but to exercise our options as per the dictates of the South African Schools Act (no. 84 of 1996), to make sure we protect our schools, educators, learners and the rights and interests of parents who wish to take their children back to school,” said Minister Motshekga.

The Minister said that some of the organizations had lost in court and now they were resorting to disruptive behavior.

### **Media Enquiries:**

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“We are disappointed and dismayed that these organisations have neglected to recognize the efforts of the department in providing alternatives for parents who out of well-founded anxiety and fear wish not to return their children to school. Some parents wish not to return their children to school because children have comorbidities and this is a fact well understood and embraced by the Department.

For these parents we’ve made provision, as allowed by the South African Schools Act for Home Education. This option is available and can be accessed by applying at Provincial Education Departments,” the Minister said.

It is also important to note that over and above the Home Education which is provided for in terms of section 51 of the South African Schools Act, the new directions have further provided extra the avenue for learners with comorbidities, parents/ guardians who out fear and anxiety are unable to send children to school, and the last category is for parents who would like to get their children continue schooling through on line learning.

The CEM urges all those aggrieved not to interfere with the rights of those parents wishing to see their children going to school.

The CEM has not ruled out the possibility of going to court to seek protection from all those hell-bent on obstructing schooling.

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