

“KNOW YOUR AREA AND CLAIM THE SPACE”

2015 WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY CELEBRATIONS

ADDRESS BY MEC MOSEBENZI ZWANE

VENUE: HLANGANANI / KOPANANG INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

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Programme director

Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality Mayor Cllr. Malefu Vilakazi

Phumelela Local Municipality Mayor Cllr. Tlokotsi Motaung

Speaker of Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality Cllr. Maduna Mbothoma

Speaker of Phumelela Local Municipality Cllr. Topsy Zwane

Municipal Managers present

HOD Mogokare Seleke

Chief Whips and Councillors present

Different Consumer Organisations

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Programme director let me start by passing my deepest condolences to the bereaved family of Honourable Minister for Public Service and Administration comrade Collins Chabane. We have lost a leader, a friend, an ally, a comrade and most of all a dedicated public servant who was not ashamed to do the right thing for his people. He was one of the most devoted and grounded people who worked with a sense of quiet determination by always striving for a better future for all the people of South Africa in line with the provisions of the Freedom Charter.

He played a remarkable role in contributing to the struggle and in the new dispensation. We salute him for his stance in the revolution. Alike, my condolence also goes to the families of his late protectors Sgt. Lesiba Seleke and Sgt. Lawrence Lentsoane. May their soul rest in peace.

Today is a big day for all South Africans as we are celebrating Human Rights Day and the events of Sharpeville which took place on the 21 March 1960 with the main event taking place at the Rosedale Field in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape as we speak. The celebration at Uitenhage is to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Uitenhage massacre that took place there on 21 March 1985.

On this day, 69 people died and 180 were wounded when police fired on a peaceful crowd that had gathered to protest against the Pass Laws. This national day celebration is an annual event to remind South African citizens about the sacrifices that accompanied the struggle for democracy and freedom that has been enjoyed for the past 20 years. The theme for this year is “**Celebrating the Freedom Charter, Enjoying Equal Human Rights for All**”. Significantly, this year marks 60 years of a historic moment in history when South Africans from all walks of life adopted the Freedom Charter in 1955, in Kliptown, Soweto. The Freedom Charter stresses among others that all shall enjoy equal human rights. Let us acknowledge ladies and gentlemen that consumer rights are human rights.

During this Human Rights Month we saw the reburial of Moses Kotane on the 14 March 2015 in Pella, North West. JB Marks’s reburial will be tomorrow in Ventersdorp. These two stalwarts played a very critical role in South Africa and shaped the political thinking of many cadres and leaders of the struggle and the alliance. Their souls will now rest in peace.

Today as we are gathered here, we are celebrating 53 years of world consumer rights day (WCRD) which was declared on the 15th March 1962. WCRD was first observed on 15 March 1983, and has since become an important occasion for mobilising citizen action. The World Consumer Rights Day is a time for promoting the basic rights of all consumers, for demanding that those rights are respected and protected, and for protesting the market abuses and social injustices which undermine them. It does not matter whether you are a learner, adult, the aged, the rich or the poor, we are all consumers.

The Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr Mzwandile Masina said during the Consumer Awareness Imbizo that was held last Sunday at Kwa-Thema in Springs that “the Consumer Protection Act is the best piece of legislation that consumers can use to protect themselves against unscrupulous lenders and service providers”.

The consumer movement has declared a set of 9 (nine) basic consumer rights that now define and inspire much of the work that the Consumers International (CI) and its members do around areas such as financial services and communications, and those are:

- **Right to Equality in the Consumer Market** - You have a right to high quality goods and services, fair pricing and unlimited access to goods and services.
- **Right to Privacy** - You have a right to restrict unwanted direct marketing and to discontinue receipt of direct marketing at any time
- **Right to Choose** - You have a right to select the supplier of your choice, to cancel or renew a fixed-term agreement, to cancel or renew a fixed-term agreement, to choose or examine goods, even after purchase and delivery and to return goods and seek redress for unsatisfactory services
- **Right to Disclosure of Information** - You have a right to information in plain and understandable language, to disclosure of prices of goods and services and right to identification of deliverers, installers and others.
- **Right to fair and Responsible Marketing** - You have a right to protection against bait marketing, negative option marketing, direct marketing and right to protection in customer loyalty programme.
- **Right to Fair and Honest Dealing** - You have a right to protection against unconscionable conduct, false, misleading or deceptive representations, fraudulent schemes, to protection against pyramid schemes.
- **Right to Fair, Just and Reasonable Terms and Conditions** - You have a right to protection against unfair, unreasonable or unjust contract terms, to obtain free copies of agreements/contracts and the right to refuse prohibited transactions, agreements, and terms or conditions.
- **Right to Fair Value, Good Quality and Safety** - You have a right to demand quality services, safe, good quality goods, to a warranty on repaired goods, to receive warnings on the fact and nature of risks and to claim damages for injuries caused by unsafe or defective goods.
- **Right to accountability from suppliers** – You have a right to protection in lay-by agreement, to protection with regard to prepaid certificates, credits, vouchers and access to prepaid services and service facilities.

Consumer International also introduced a set of consumer responsibilities to compliment consumer rights. These remain crucial principles for many consumer rights organisations today:

- **Critical awareness** - consumers must be awakened to be more questioning about the provision of the quality of goods and services.
- **Involvement or action** - consumers must assert themselves and act to ensure that they get a fair deal.
- **Social responsibility** - consumers must act with social responsibility, with concern and sensitivity to the impact of their actions on other citizens, in particular, in relation to disadvantaged groups in the community and in relation to the economic and social realities prevailing.
- **Ecological responsibility** - there must be a heightened sensitivity to the impact of consumer decisions on the physical environment, which must be developed to a harmonious way, promoting conservation as the most critical factor in improving the real quality of life for the present and the future.
- **Solidarity** - the best and most effective action is through cooperative efforts through the formation of consumer/citizen groups who together can have the strength and influence to ensure that adequate attention is given to the consumer interest.

The Consumer Protection Office which is located in my department is part and parcel of a family of Provincial Consumer Protection Offices in the country as well as the Consumers International (CI) which is the global voice for consumers in the world. The most common violations that our consumer office is experiencing are complaints ranging from: Motor vehicles, Cash loans (Mashonisas), Cellular phones, Household appliances and *etc.*

I am making an appeal to you today consumers, to say that if you have a reason to believe that your consumer rights have been infringed, for example being short-changed in the market place, you are free to lodge a complaint. Complaint can be lodged telephonically or in person and it is not only about bad service but it can also be when your safety is at stake, when a product is out of stock, when you do not get enough information, or when you are not treated with respect. *Ke boikarabelo ba basebetsi ba kantoro ya Consumer*

Protector ho etsa bonnete ba hore tletlebo tsa lona eba sephiri se pakeng tsa bona le lona ka nako tsohle. Mme hopola hore ditshebeletso tsa rona ke mahala.

Our statistics shows that since the start of financial year in April to date, the Consumer Protection Office resolved 247 cases with the money totaling R1 021 109.98 recovered and returned back into the pockets of the consumers. This ladies and gentlemen shows commitment and dedication of my department in serving the Free State communities. We want to extend our appreciation to the Consumer Affairs Court officials who served in the previous terms. Their hard work has not gone unnoticed. We applaud them for their sterling work that has been done so far.

In line with this year's theme of "**Helping Consumers Choose Healthy Diets**", the celebrations today seeks to educate, teach, inform and share knowledge with consumers to be mindful of what they eat and be careful of unhealthy diets as they pose threat to your health. We need to teach our children from an early age about the importance of eating healthy food.

According to the National Health Insurance (NHI) discussion paper released in 2011, non communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, stroke, heart diseases, chronic lung diseases, chronic kidney diseases, etc account for about 28% of total health-care spend in South Africa. Obesity is the main culprit, though other factors such as smoking and drug and alcohol abuse also play a role. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that non communicable diseases are the leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for 60 percent of deaths in all humans. The time is now ladies and gentlemen to wake up to the price of unhealthy diets before it is too late.

In addition to today's celebration, we are inaugurating the membership of the seven newly appointed Free State Consumer Affairs Court Tribunal who will serve the court for a period of one year commencing from last month (February) until March 2016. Their names are:

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| a) Professor Dr. R. M. Jansen | - Chairperson |
| b) Adv. A. I. B. Lechwano | - Member |
| c) Mr. K. L. Mould | - Member |
| d) Mr. T. M. Abrahams | - Member |
| e) Mr. N. M. Bahlekazi | - Alternate Chairperson |

- f) Mr. G. A. Sefo - Alternate Member
- g) Mr. M. I. W. Hlalele - Alternate Member

These professionals ladies and gentlemen will take oath in front of you today that they will serve all the Free State consumers with pride and dignity. Make sure that you use their free services to your advantage.

In closing, as we celebrate the world consumer rights day and human rights day, let us acknowledge that even our foreign brothers and sisters have got rights as well. We might compete for the market but that is not the reason to loot on them. With that said, I want to urge all consumers to know your rights because they are there to protect you against unfair business practices. It is your duty to complain when you have genuine grievances, alike taking into consideration that as a consumer you also have responsibilities. Together we can change the perception of unfair business practices in our province.

I thank you!!!