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MEDIA RELEASE

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Premier Mokgoro calls for tangible, practical programmes against GBV

Mahikeng - North West Premier, Prof. Tebogo Job Mokgoro has today addressed a Webinar arranged by the Office on the Status of Women and Rights of the Children in the Office of the Premier, this to mark Women's Month. Themed *Generation Equality Realising Women's Rights For an Equal Future*, the webinar was attended by representatives from different sectors including the North West University, Commission for Gender Equality, Men for Real, National Department of Women, Youth, Children and Persons with Disability and various departments in the North West Provincial Government.

In his address, Premier Mokgoro who remembered North West women and children who were killed by those close to them since the declaration of the State of Disaster on COVID-19, said the safety and protection of women should be the society's number one priority.

"On behalf of the provincial government and the people of the province, I wish to condemn the abuse, abduction and killing of women and children", said Premier Mokgoro who maintained that the focus of Women's month should be on fighting the scourge of gender based violence in the society.

Premier Mokgoro challenged the Webinar attendants to ensure that today's engagement produces tangible recommendations and programmes against gender based violence, that must be integrated into the provincial government's planning, this to ensure that implementation, monitoring and reporting takes place.

Mokgoro reiterated the Provincial Government's commitment towards the safety and protection of women, young girls and all other vulnerable groups against all forms of violence, and urged the police and courts to act decisively against all acts of gender based violence.

One of the participants, Otshepeng Babeile who is a North West Ambassador for Child Rights and a Grade 10 learner, addressed the Webinar on a girl child's perspective on bodily autonomy and sexual reproductive health and rights, and highlighted the need for society to encourage talks with young boys and girls, to avoid stereotypic views about the development of children.

"If all men can respect and accept a woman for who she is, then we will not hear news every second day about a girl or woman who has been murdered or raped. If policy makers and people in power were to take a woman's perspective on economic issues, then the rate of unemployment would decrease", stressed Babeile.

Mr Mompoloki Tsie from Men for Real North West, a Non-Profit Organisation that raises awareness against abuse perpetrated by and against men, addressed the Webinar on violence against women and children from a perspective of a man. Mr Tsie urged society to not only empower a girl child, but pay attention to empowering and investing in a boy child too. The organisation reiterated its continued effort to work with the provincial government to reduce gender based violence, and teach the young generation to become responsible beings.

Other speakers included Dr Kezell Klinck from the North West University who focused on the gendered impact of COVID-19 pandemic and why it hits women harder; the Acting Head of Department of Social Development whose address was on the victims of violence and programmes on the economic empowerment of women, as well as the Commission on Gender Equality which focused on An end to all forms of violence against women and children.

ENDS

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