

**Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) press statement on the inauguration of Persons with Disability Advisory council established under Section 4 of Persons with Disability Equity Act**

Introduction

Persons with Disability Equity Act is the legislation passed by the Parliament with the object of establishing the Persons with Disability Advisory Council, provide for equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and recognise the rights of persons with disabilities in Lesotho. Persons with Disability Equity Act entered into force on the 12 March 2021 when it was published through a notice on the gazette.

Though, the Persons with Disability Advisory Council has been established by this Act, it has not yet been inaugurated by the Minister of social Development as the law prescribes.

Considering the important role the council on the rights of persons with disabilities will be playing in advancing effective monitoring of human rights of persons with disabilities.

Taking into account the need for full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in decision making processes affecting their lives in Lesotho.

Noting dire situation of the human rights of persons with disabilities in terms of access to infrastructure, mobility, communication, education, healthcare facilities and employment opportunities.

LNFOD has initiated a campaign for the inauguration of the Persons with Disability Advisory Council

The campaign targets the Minister of Social Development since the law states that he/she is responsible for inaugurating the council. The campaign goes further to target the private sector and the public at large to raise awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and means through which they can be promoted, respected, and protected by the community.

The campaign further advocates for the allocation of the adequate and sufficient budget for the council so that it may discharge its functions efficiently.

What LNFOD has done so far

On the 30 September LNFOD held a lobbying and advocacy meeting with the Ministry of Social Development, and the portfolio parliamentary committee on social cluster to ask the Acting Minister of Social Development to speed up the process of setting up the council by appointing the members nominated by the different sectors into the council.

The Honourable Minister, Keketso Sello acknowledged the essence of inaugurating the council but, highlighted that his ministry did not budget for the inauguration of the council this fiscal year. He pledged that; the Persons with Disability Advisory council will be budgeted for this fiscal year so that it can be inaugurated in the next fiscal year.

LNFOD argues that the Ministry is legally bound to inaugurate the council because the law establishing the council is in force. Legally speaking, the Ministry of social development is not justified to say that it is unable to inaugurate the council due to budget constraints, yet it is the one which published the gazette putting the law in force.

Secondly, LNFOD had a conversation with the private sector including LCCI, and different taxi transport association on how they can promote the enforcement and ensure inherent human dignity of persons with disabilities in accordance with the Act.

In addition, LNFOD wrote to all sectors of the society represented in the council asking them to comply with section 5(1) of the Persons with Disability Equity Act by nominating and submitting the names of their representatives to the Minister of social development.

LNFOD has also submitted a list of the names nominated by member organisations and submitted them to the Minister. The expectation is that the Minister will consider given names and gazette such names as members of the disability council so that they can start their work in accordance with the law.

LNFOOD has also built the capacity of its member organisations on articulating advocacy messages around the establishment of the council so that they can educate the public about the rights of persons with disabilities and self-advocate for the inauguration of the council on the rights of persons with disabilities.

From the Foregoing, LNFOOD is calling upon the Minister of disability affairs to operationalise the Persons with Disability Advisory Council through the appointment of council members, and provision of budgetary and administrative support to the council.

LNFOOD calls upon the Minister of social development to ensure that the Ministry allocate adequate and sufficient budget to the council which will ensure that it is best place to monitor the rights and provide directives and advice to all government ministries relating to all disability issues.

LNFOOD calls upon the media sector to spread the advocacy message about the need to inaugurate council and allocate budget so as to operationalise the council for the sake of the vulnerable population of persons with disabilities living in Lesotho.

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