

**Address by the Minister of Justice & Correctional Services,
Adv. Michael Masutha, MP
Launch of Audio-Visual Technology for CSPBs
Head Office, Tshwane
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**Deputy Minister of Correctional Services: Mr. Thabang Makwetla
Acting National Commissioner Mr. Z Modise and his management
team**

**Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster
Representatives**

Members of the Media

Distinguished Guests

Parole is used internationally to place offenders under supervision within the community. It is neither a right nor an end of a sentence, but a legislated mechanism where an offender, under specific conditions, serves the rest of his sentence outside a correctional facility. South Africa's parole regime dates as early as the Prisons and Reformatories Act 13 of 1911.

Currently, in addition to the approximately 157,476 persons in custody, 70,355 persons are under the system of Community Corrections. Of the 70,355, there are 51,379 parolees, 17,399 probationers and 1,577 awaiting trial.

We presently have 53 Correctional Supervision and Parole Boards throughout the country. Collectively, the Parole Boards, consider about 54 000 submissions for parole placements each year.

I mentioned in the Budget Speech for Correctional Services on the 16th of July 2014 that during this month, we will launch a video-conferencing system which have been installed in the offices of the parole boards. This innovation is intended to eliminate a barrier like long distance for the participation by our communities and the victims of crime in parole hearings. The Audio Visual System will reduce the hassle of travelling,

as well as financial costs incurred by victims and relatives of victims, when participating in the parole process.

This launch goes a long way in demonstrating our commitment as the Ministry of Justice and Correctional Services that the voices of complainants or the offended must be heard in the entire criminal justice system.

Although progress was made since 2009 in mobilizing victims to participate in parole hearings of the CSPB, from just 108 to 1125 cases per year, this still represents less than five percent of hearings that result in parole placements of offenders that roughly reaches 25 000. With this video conferencing capacity, built with funding from the Criminal Asset Recovery Account (CARA), victims can be informed to go to their nearest CSPB offices and be linked to the actual parole board hearings.

Today, we are pleased to announce that, indeed, victims of crime in South Africa are now able to go to their nearest CSPB office and be linked to the actual parole board hearing. This is in line with international trends to give more recognition to victims, and it is in support of the Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) of Government.

In order to facilitate the involvement of complainants or victims in Parole Board meetings, provision has been made in both Section 75 (4) of the Correctional Services Act of 1998, Act 111 of 1998 as amended, as well as Section 299A of the Criminal Procedure Act of 1977, Act 51 of 1977, to regulate matters in this regard. In addition, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development published Minimum Standards on Services for Victims of Crime as well as the Service Charter for Victims of Crime in South Africa which also deals with the rights of victims.

Factors that guide a decision by the Parole Board and Minister in granting or declining parole include:

- a) The offender's response to development, and treatment, programmes associated with rehabilitation and correcting offending behaviour;

- b) The existence, and quality, of support systems in the community;
- c) The probability of re-offending;
- d) The risk that the offender may pose to the community at large; and
- e) The risk to the victim/complainant.

The 2005 White Paper on Corrections directs Correctional Services to pay greater attention to victims of crime and their communities. Section 7.2.9 of the White paper recognizes that, “the absence of services to victims of crime means that the negative impact of crime on individual, family and community is largely ignored.” In addition, where it is appropriate, the Department remains committed to encouraging restoration of relations between the offenders and victims of crime as part of our broader strategy to fight crime and prevent reoffending.

As a department, we must continue to implement a victims-centred approach to corrections. Over the past two days, the Department of Correctional Services hosted a working session, at the Kgosi Mampuru II Management Area here in Tshwane, with Chairpersons and Members of the Correctional Supervision and Parole Boards (CSPBs), as well as Case Management Committees (CMCs), to highlight the critical role of CSPBs in restorative justice and in enabling, encouraging and supporting the effective participation of victims at all stages of the criminal justice process. On 2nd and 3rd December, we will host a similar session in KwaZulu-Natal.

I am particularly pleased that this launch occurs during the United Nations’ 16 Days campaign of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children. It is during this campaign that as a country, we consolidate our efforts in highlighting the plight, and elevating the voices of vulnerable groups like women, children, and the disabled who are affected by crime.

We call upon victims, and their families, to register their interest to be involved in the parole process at their nearest CSPB office. This will also assist, and ease, the tracing of complainants and victims.

Building on this, the department's overall development objective is to contribute towards building safe, and peaceful, communities, by reducing crime and providing more effective, multi-sectoral and coordinated support to victims of crime.

Thank you very much.