



**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES,
RONALD LAMOLA, MP
DURING THE ABSORPTION OF LEARNERS INTO CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
SYSTEM
AT MODDERBEE MANAGEMENT AREA
2 AUGUST 2021**

Deputy Minister for Correctional Services, Inkosi Patekile Holomisa

National Commissioner, Mr Arthur Fraser

Acting Chief Operations Commissioner, Mr Phiko Mbambo

Chief Deputy Commissioners

Our New Recruits

Esteemed Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, today marks an important milestone in the Department of Correctional Services.

Government's foremost priority of creating opportunities for young people and supporting them to access work opportunities is practically demonstrated.

We will not rest on our laurels as government, young people are crying out loud for employment opportunities.

Statistics South Africa painfully indicates that young people are struggling in the South African Labour Market.

The unemployment rate for young people for those aged 14 to 34, stands at 46.3%.

Young people aged 15-24 are more vulnerable in the labour market, with an unemployment rate of 63%.

It is against this background that we were resolute that the Department of Correctional Services had to reprioritise its budget to ensure that all the 2000 learners of the 2019/20 Correctional Services Learnership Programme are absorbed into permanent security positions.

Since the inception of the Correctional Services Learnership Programme in 2010, a total of just over ten thousand young people comprising of 4 542 females and 5 488 males were trained.

10 015 of these learners were permanently appointed into security positions, only 15 learners were not appointed due to criminal records and natural attrition.

We remain committed to investing and empowering young people economically.

We have set ourselves an annual target of 20% for youth employment, we will ensure that the department achieves this target.

Young people are the future, but sadly owing to various historical injustices, they bear the brunt of a concentrated economy and it's attendant disparities.

We will spare no effort to tackle inequalities and systemic barriers which are still prevalent in the country.

This cannot be postponed, it poses a serious threat to our democratic dispensation.

To all our new recruits, you must know that the work of Correctional officers is, by its very nature, largely hidden from the public you are going to serve, and yet it affects society in a very profound way.

We always emphasise that correctional officials undertake a demanding but rewarding role with such commitment and humanity, and for that they are owed a debt of gratitude.

I am pleased to see so many young South Africans, all committed to the serve the nation.

You have signed up to be our hidden heroes and heroines.

This is the beginning of a long journey for all of you.

I must congratulate you for successfully completing the correctional training and we can only be proud that we are now employing you to start serving the nation as officials in our correctional centres.

You are now a part of the criminal justice system that maintains law and order in our society. Our laws and their enforcement are sacred in our democracy.

They are the very foundation of our society; the rules to which all of us are bound and by which we all must abide.

Every South African deserves to know that the institutions entrusted with upholding our laws do so with integrity, fairness and independence.

Our people deserve to know that the women and men who staff those offices hold their positions, not on the basis of who they know, where they come from, who their parents may be, or what their ethnicity or religion may be, but on the basis of merit, their training and their ability to do the job.

Hence it is important that at every level of law enforcement in our country, be transparent, accountable and ensure that all appointments are made on the basis of merit, and merit alone.

From the moment a crime is reported, to the investigations that follow, to the charges that are brought and to the trial that is held, all the way to the sentence that is decided and carried out, our people must have faith that justice is impartial, objective and equitable.

That is why we subjected you to meet a high standard of training as we calibrate Correctional Services to be empowered with officials who are fit for purpose.

This is what will drive the nation to have full confidence in our criminal justice system as being truly just and fair to all people. An enduring faith in our institutions is what truly brings stability to our national life and development as a nation.

Being a correctional official is a tough job. It requires dedication, professionalism, resilience, courage and a belief that people can change. The work that correctional officials do is rarely in the public eye and is too often misunderstood and underrated.

But this work plays a vital role in protecting the public and protecting victims from prolonged harm. While certain sections of society focus on the negative, Correctional officers, face very real challenges every day,—and at the heart of it all, will be you our new Correctional officers.

What is expected of you is adherence to the highest standard of professionalism in your line of duty and ensuring that sentences determined by our courts are served by inmates.

In doing so, you help build a stable South Africa, and from that stability flows all our success as a nation as we work hard to improve the quality of life for all of our people.

When you serve in your new roles, you will certainly face your fair share of challenges. In our correctional facilities today, we face emerging issues, such as the smuggling of contrabands and gangsterism - that will be your duty to address.

It will disappoint me to be told that some of you have been dismissed for having joined the smuggling gang

I need you to understand that there are no short-cuts in life. You will not get rich through corruption.

You will not build your community through corruption.

You will not inspire future generations.

On the contrary, you will be amongst those in orange overalls in our facilities.

It will not only pain me deeply to see you changing your brown uniform into orange, merely because you failed to conduct yourself appropriately.

It will disorientate our communities, it will disorientate future generations who look up to you as the custodians of law and order.

Unlike those who are in your custody, your consciousness must never leave you.

I encourage you to keep yourself educated and aware of new developments and how they can affect your profession, and how you can use such to create a safer environment, for yourselves and for those in your care.

I can assure you, this ministry will be there to support you and ensure that you are well equipped to handle whatever challenges you face in your day-to-day work.

The South African government has committed itself to offer an effective and humane incarceration where inmates are rehabilitated so that they can return to make a full contribution to their communities.

This is a complicated mandate as we all know that reforming the character of a person is extraordinary difficult.

This says that your job will very difficult, but it must still be done, day in and day out, in a humane and respectful way.

It demands compassion and skill in discerning the character of others, and firmness - in short, it requires men and women willing to combine public service with the highest standards of care for those in custody.

As South Africans, we believe in giving our people a second chance.

Only a correctional system with humanity and respect at its core will deliver rehabilitation, and we must always remember that a sentence is supposed, not just to punish, but also to rehabilitate and prepare an offender to reintegrate into a community.

Only then, we can truly call South Africa a society that is safe for all citizens, where the rule of law is respected, and the human rights of all people are upheld at all times.

I therefore trust that all of you will perform well in your duties, and once more, I congratulate you as you embark on this new journey.

We will be available every step of the way to support you and work with you to keep our correctional system in line with the highest possible standards – but it is up to each one of you to rise to that challenge.

We are currently fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic in our correctional centres.

Through efforts of our men and women in brown uniform, we have managed to mitigate against the spread of this disease in our centres.

We have started with our vaccination rollout programme for both officials and inmates, those of you who have not yet received their jabs, I encourage you not to hesitate but rather get vaccinated immediately.

With these words, I take this opportunity to welcome all of you to the Department of Correctional Services.

We are looking forward to your contributions towards a safer South Africa.

We wish you success in your careers and never compromise on sustained learning and training.

I have the pleasure of now handing you over to the National Commissioner.

Serve our people with pride.

I thank you.

Issued by Ministry of Justice and Correctional Services