

## MEDIA STATEMENT

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### MINISTER NZIMANDE STATEMENT ON THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENT CONGRESS (SASCO)

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, wishes the South African Students' Congress (Sasco) well as it celebrated its 30th anniversary on Monday, the 6th September 2021.

Minister Nzimande said Sasco's 30th anniversary marks another milestone in its existence since it was launched in 1991 at Rhodes University.

Minister Nzimande said the formation of Sasco was not the beginning of an era, but rather the culmination and an end of two decades of student politics dating back to the days of the South African Student Organisation (Saso) in the 1970s and its successors, the Azanian Student's Organisation (Azaso) and the South African National Students Congress (Sansco) in the 1980s.

"Sasco is an organisation that has given our country great patriots and competent cadres, many of whom carry heavy responsibilities in state institutions and our business sector. It is an organisation that continues to ensure that to this day, despite the political freedom we achieved in 1994, the transformation of our post school education and training sector is at the centre of our developmental objectives and state," said Minister Nzimande.

To live-up to the struggles of Sasco, our national aim is to increase the total headcount enrolment in higher education, public and private institution, to 1.62 million by 2030, as envisaged by the National Development Plan (NDP).

"Sasco must therefore see the realignment of the Departments of Higher Education and Training together with Science and Technology as a another opportunity to open opportunities in the production of both knowledge and skills for students to enable them to create the necessary jobs required by our economy and to significantly contribute innovation in our country, said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande said Sasco should also be able to take advantage of the National Plan for Post-School Education and Training (NPPSET), which gives practical planning effect to the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training. The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training aims to build an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School system.

The NPPSET is a consolidated roadmap for a more integrated, transformed, articulated and effective post-school system.

“This is our single most major commitment and development in the struggle to overcome the spatial legacies of under-development inherited from the apartheid and colonial system,” said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande further said in 2018, the department introduced a national bursary scheme to support students from families earning a gross annual income of up to R350 000 per annum at universities and TVET colleges, to cover their full tuition costs, books and learner support materials, and to provide subsidies to assist with accommodation, living expenses, and transport costs where appropriate.

This bursary scheme is now phased in at all our universities since its introduction with the new first-time cohort added each year. Next year, in 2022, the scheme will cover all cohorts of students across the university system. The scheme will support approximately 50% of the undergraduate student population at public universities.

“The NSFAS approved budget for 2020/21 is R41.5 billion. This excludes the R6.4 billion additional budget approved. We are indeed alive to the reality that there are students who are still left out of the funding policies of government, particularly the “missing middle”. This is amongst the reason why as government we are reviewing our entire funding policy with the aim to expand the funding for students by involving more stakeholders and the private sector,” said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande said he remains committed to strengthening and developing the PSET sector by investing in infrastructure to provide quality teaching, learning, student accommodation, and research and innovation spaces.

“The total amount currently available for investment in infrastructure projects across the 26 universities during the 2021/22 to 2023/24 MTEF period is R9.546 billion. We will continue to prioritise infrastructure development at Historically Disadvantaged universities to ensure that maintenance backlogs are addressed and the quality of infrastructure delivery management is improved at these institutions,” said Minister Nzimande.

Many of these advances are based on the many struggles and demands of the progressive student movement over the last 50 years, of which SASCO and its predecessors have been a key part.

Minister Nzimande also calls upon Sasco to collaborate with the Department, through HIGHER HEALTH to declare a war against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in the PSET sector, as well as to intensify the struggle to defeat the Covid 19 pandemic both in our sector and society as a whole.

“As a Minister, I will always value the role and contribution of Sasco and other student organizations and respect their autonomy as part of the broad democratic project. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of Sasco, I remember the many students who gave their lives for our freedom – through pioneering roles from the old Turfloop, Fort Hare, Ngoye, University of Durban Westville (UDW), University of the Western Cape (UWC) and the Black (Medical) Section of the then University of Natal and other campuses across our country,” said Minister Nzimande.

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