

Notes for Maidens Conference – ahead of Umkhosi wohlanga

- Greetings,
- Indlunkulu,
- Protocol,
- Ladies and gentlemen present,
- Amakhosi,
- Amaqhikiza,
- Izintombi,

The Maiden's conference is an annual programme that takes place in June where maidens are being selected for an annual Reed Dance in kwaNongoma eNyokeni Royal Residence.

The Reed Dance known as "Umkhosi woMhlanga re-introduced by His Majesty King Goodwill to encourage young girls to delay sexual activity until marriage, and thus limiting the possibility of HIV/AIDS transmission. In this event maiden's get a feel of how things are done in the Reed Dance which encourages them to keep their virginity until they reach the qualifying age. It also outlines the responsibility of Matrons (oMama BeziNtombi) and allows them to share their experiences and challenges on how best these young girls can be raised.

The eThekwini Municipality Community Participation Unit in partnership with the KZN Department of Arts and Culture will be hosting the 2017 Maiden's conference. This event intends to educate, promote, facilitate and raise awareness on moral regeneration and management of social ills especially to young women. The event is expected to be attended by an estimated number of +- 6000 maiden's from all 110 eThekwini Wards. This day will be also characterized by various institutions that will be providing the necessary guidelines and opportunities they have to enhance the improvement and the livelihood of these young women.

The MEC (Arts and Culture), His Majesty the king Representative, His Worship the Mayor, Amakhosi aseNdlunkulu and Amakhosikazi Amakhosi, Executive Committee Members and Senior Officials from various departments will be also attending the event.

Women's Month

The year 2017 marks the 61st anniversary of the Women's March to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956. On that day up to 20 000 women of all races, class and religious persuasions protested against the extension of Pass Laws. The march was a turning point in the role of women in the struggle for freedom and our society at large.

Women Abuse

While a lot of progress is being made in making South Africa a better place for women, the country faces a serious problem of violence and abuse directed towards women and girls.

The country has witnessed horrific incidents recently of the killing of women by men known to them such as intimate partners and also total strangers. Several children have also been attacked and killed.

These incidents have caused enormous pain and distress in the country.

The crimes against women take many forms - physical, sexual, economic, psychological and emotional, and they all represent a violation of human rights and dignity. The crimes include sexual offences, human trafficking, domestic violence and the criminal victimization of elderly women who are accused of witchcraft.

The police indicate that the biggest problem with the policing of these crimes is that they usually happen behind closed doors and in secluded areas where it is very difficult to police.

Another challenge is that victims have been known to withdraw cases in domestic violence and sexual offences where the offender is known to the victim.

In these cases families may intervene and reach an agreement among themselves to maintain a conspiracy of silence in exchange for money or some other financial benefit.

This conduct is unacceptable as it further perpetuates violence against women and turns such crimes into a matter that can be resolved through cash transactions benefitting families.

In other cases, the survivors prefer to keep quiet rather than speak out, due to the stigma attached to sexual abuse.

Other families have to confront the tragedy of human trafficking which is a painful and despicable crime that is tantamount to modern day slavery.

Young women and girls communicate are promised jobs or visits abroad and end up being forced into prostitution in hijacked buildings or brothels locally or in foreign countries.

We urge parents to take a keen interest on the activities of their children on social media and provide ongoing advice and support so that they can be protected.

Most are enticed to join the trafficking rings via social media.

- All South Africans must act to prevent abuse and to ensure a safer society for women and children.
- We can and must do more to prevent violence against women, support survivors of abuse and bring perpetrators to justice.
- Through our collective efforts we can create greater awareness; reduce the number of sexual offences and attacks on women and children.
- Government alone cannot eradicate this scourge and calls on all sectors to partner with it in creating safer communities.
- Gender equality is one of the basic principle and foundation in our constitution.