

## **Minister Naledi Pandor's Remarks at Cedar House School**

Department of Higher Education and Training

**Tuesday**, 13 March 2018

### **Kenilworth Road, Cape Town**

Our Constitution unites a nation of many languages and significant cultural, religious and socio-economic diversity. Our Constitution is a value-based supreme law of the land which “lays the foundation for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and in which every citizen is equally protected by the law.”

The Constitution embodies the values of a just and caring society. It requires us to understand and embrace one another and to value our cultural differences rather than be afraid of them.

Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, from the poorest of the poor to the most powerful in our society.

This is because the right to be treated with dignity is not something that you earn, but is basic to all human beings.

I'm pleased to have been here this morning to see our constitution put into practice here at Cedar House.

We have many good reasons to be proud of South Africa. Foremost among these is the respect that we have earned in the world for our peaceful transition from oppression to an increasingly mature and robust democracy. The creativity, innovation and determination that enabled South Africans to solve what appeared to be intractable problems in the past are not only evident among our politicians, but also among our

sportsmen and sportswomen, our artists, our religions, and especially among our language and cultural practitioners. One of the guiding principles we seek to promote in society is the recognition that our racial, religious and linguistic diversity is a national asset, and not a burden. While being a part of Africa, we truly celebrate the fact that we have a wonderful mix of people from the continent, as well as from Europe and the East. We are proud to have 11 official languages, and are committed to promoting the development of all of these. We have adherents of almost every known world religion, as well as others, like the Zion Christian Church, a wonderful mix of traditional and indigenous beliefs, with over two million members.

We, the people, must lead in creating a new society, free of the divisive and destructive ideology of apartheid, free to redefine ourselves as uniquely committed to diversity, freely appreciative of religious freedom as a force for peace, and alert that race is a factor in our daily life but not the sole factor as human dignity goes beyond race.

We, the people, are the motive force that must give shape and meaning to a United South Africa.

Our constitution refers to what must be addressed. It calls for a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it, black and white. It affirms a nation united in diversity. This is an ideal that South Africans embrace and we are unique in this affirmation of diversity.

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