

Statement by Honourable Dipuo Peters MP, Minister of Transport regarding Easter 2015 Road Safety campaign

08 April 2015

Programme Director

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Ladies and Gentlemen

C S Lewis once remarked I quote: **“courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point,”** close quote.

We approached this year’s Easter weekend with a high level of consciousness following the tragic crash that claimed the life of the honourable Minister Collins Chabane and his protectors. The level of awareness about road safety was high and there were many voices making a clarion call for individuals to take responsibility to reduce the carnage on our roads. There was unanimity in the call that said **“Lets save lives and move South Africa forward”**.

The road traffic fraternity was in full force during this period to serve the South African public and protect all road users. Our campaign sought to enhance co-ordination and integration as well as to improve law enforcement and road traffic safety awareness activities for maximum results.

We gallantly aimed at reminding and institutionalizing the notion of Road Safety being everybody's responsibility by ensuring cooperation among all agencies, different departments, road users, non-governmental and faith-based organizations in their numerous formations.

It became glaringly clear that this Easter weekend was going to be the most challenging one characterised by the fact that it coincided with the end of the month, school holidays and various pilgrimages. In its own nature travel during this period increases traffic volumes on the roads and thus putting a strain on our road infrastructure and human capital.

Very significantly was the change in the travel patterns since most of the road users opted to travel after dusk which on its own brings about risks of fatigue, speeding, un-roadworthy vehicles; and

drunken driving to mention a few. These were indeed the trying times but we are encouraged in the knowledge that **courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.** Our determination and resilience will see us through these testing times and we shall leave no stone unturned in changing the attitudes and behaviour of our road users.

These carnages and unwarranted misery brought about by irresponsible and lackadaisical behaviour can and should be avoided. We can no longer afford to bring this untold misery and suffering to innocent families, we can no longer afford to be a nation of orphans, widows and widowers. We can no longer afford to bring this untold strain to our economy, health and social services. Indeed we cannot be at peace with ourselves when we fail to take responsibility and unanimously declare **Enough is Enough.**

We should all be inspired by the positive thinking espoused by the respected renowned author Charles Dickens who once said: **“Nothing we do is done in vain. I believe with all my soul that we shall see triumph”.**

The official vehicle population has grown this year and this has translated into an added burden on the road infrastructure network and law enforcement capacity.

In December 2013 there were 11 006 184 vehicles throughout the country. By December 2014, this number had grown by 363 741 to reach 11 369 925 registered vehicles. More than half (52%) of these vehicles are in Gauteng (38.76%) and KwaZulu Natal (13.47%).

The number of driver’s licenses issued had also increased from 10 645 046 to 11 148 372 meaning that 503 326 new drivers had recently been licensed to use our road networks.

The reports demonstrate abundantly clear that during the period under review, we experienced an increase in traffic volumes along major arterial routes leading out of Gauteng with the N1 north to Limpopo and south to the Free State, the N3 to KwaZulu Natal and N4 towards Mpumalanga among others.

The volume picked up from 09H00 with an average of 2200 vehicles per hour passing through the tollgates on Thursday as the long weekend started. The highest volume of 3387 was recorded between 14H00 and 15H00 at Pumulani toll plaza towards Limpopo. At the end of the weekend on Monday the highest volume was recorded in Pumulani plaza where 4494 vehicles passed through the plaza between 10H00 and 11H00.

Our robust law enforcement and zero tolerance to lawlessness on our roads clearly indicate that the major factors that contribute to road fatalities are avoidable and can be eliminated.

These factors, among others, include:

- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Reckless and negligent driving
- Un-roadworthy vehicles
- Overtaking on blind rises, barrier lines and areas of poor visibility
- A total disregard for rules of the road
- Fatigue caused by failure to rest at periodic intervals.
- Informal settlement situated alongside busy roads and intersections
- Walking on and crossing of highways and
- Failure to wear visible clothing at night

We have committed ourselves to a 365 days road safety programme to save lives on our roads. We implement this plan to realise the goals of the United Nations Decade of Action global road safety campaign to reduce road carnages by half in 2020.

As 2015 marks the half way mark towards 2020 it means we must double our efforts in implementing our plans to reach that goal in the next five years.

The period we have just come from can only be described in the words of Dickens who observed that: **“It was the best of time, it was the worst time, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair...”**

Very disturbingly and inducing a sense of shocks are the current trends amplifying flagrant disregard of the law and reckless usage of our roads. This phenomenon is underpinned by the fact that 48 percent of our fatalities comprised of passengers, 28 percent being drivers and 20 percent accounts for pedestrians while two percent are cyclists another two percent is unknown.

It is only befitting and appropriate that we recognise the contribution made by pedestrians in taking road safety seriously as there is a marked decrease from the December statistics by 16 percent. And invariably the driver and passenger figures accounting for 76 percent as opposed to the 63 percent figure that was experienced during the festive season.

Our untold misery during this Easter holiday found expression and resonance at the time when these crashes occurred. Very interestingly 37 percent of the crashes occurred between 18H00 in the evening and 24H00 at night while 25 percent occurred between 12H00 midday to 18H00 in the evening. A total of 62 percent occurred between 12H00 to 24H00 as opposed to the usual pattern of crashes happening between 22H00 and 06H00 when most of our law enforcers are not visible on the roads underpinned by the challenge of implementing law enforcement on a 24/7 basis.

Ladies and gentlemen allow me to express my disquiet and disappointment at the high rate of crashes and fatalities experienced during this Easter weekend. And this gloomy picture cannot be left unchallenged. The total crashes for the period under review is 208 resulting in 287 fatalities as opposed to the previous year during the same period when we had 148 crashes resulting in 193 fatalities. These are heads of families, breadwinners and people whose potential could have been used to build our economy and move South Africa forward. Surely by any standard and imagination, we just cannot accept this behaviour on our roads. Our roads cannot be death traps. It is the intransigent human conduct that is responsible for mowing our people to death.

Let me hasten to indicate that stringent and robust measures will be put in place to stop these carnages. We will be upscaling and massifying coordination between all spheres of government in so far as law enforcement is concerned. We should be found at each and every corner to preserve the lives of our people.

Unapologetically we will decisively root out corruption at all Driver Learner Testing Centres as well as in our law enforcement fraternity. We will intensify our partnership with faith based organisation, civic organisations and formations, inculcating and engendering a culture of patriotism and responsibility on road safety education. The quality of our drivers leaves much to be desired and to that extent we will ensure that driver training is upskilled and is of good standard.

I thank all those road users who abided by traffic laws and helped us to save lives. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families and the next of kin of those who lost their lives on our roads. To those who are still recuperating in hospitals we wish them a speedy recovery.

Ladies and gentlemen allow me again to borrow from the words Dickens when he said: **“Nothing we do is done in vain. I believe with all my soul that we shall see triumph”**.

I thank you.