

Media Statement: SAHRC Celebrates Its 25th Anniversary: An Opportunity to Reflect on its Legacy

Attention: Editors and Reporters

Thursday 1st October 2020

The 2nd of October 2020 marks a milestone for the constitutional democracy and the promotion and protection of human rights in South Africa as the South Human Rights Commission (the SAHRC or the Commission) celebrates twenty five years of its existence. The twenty fifth year of the Commission's existence continues to evidence the relevance of the institution, established by the supreme law of the land, the Constitution, in contributing towards the establishment and deepening of a culture of human rights in the country. Chapter 9 of the Constitution establishes the SAHRC, as the national human rights institution (NHRI) in this country with the mandate to protect, promote and monitor the attainment of human rights, rights which are outlined in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights.

In recognition of the danger posed by the Novel Coronavirus strain, COVID-19, which caused a global pandemic and has impacted our people and country in a devastating manner in the year that coincides with the Commission's twenty fifth anniversary, the Commission will be commemorating its anniversary virtually / digitally, adhering to social distancing and taking measures to curb the spread of the virulent virus. The Commission invites all throughout South Africa, who are able to, to join the Commission in marking the SAHRC's quarter century of existence. The link for the digital celebration, which will be held from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM, on the 2nd of October 2020, is:

<https://sahrc1.webex.com/sahrc1/onstage/g.php?MTID=e4cf6c455b07342557f43fb6de41b6d0f>.

The Commission started with a mere handful of officials in 1995 and has grown in size over the past 25 years to have over 180 personnel in 2020. Today the Commission is without doubt a leading champion of human rights both within South Africa and regionally within the African continent and has achieved global recognition. The Commission has full speaking rights in the UN Human Rights Council. The Commission also played a leading role in establishing the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and was elected to chair both bodies in recognition of its role and stature in the global community of human rights institutions.

In implementing its constitutional mandate and exercising its specific powers, conferred on it in terms of the South African Human Rights Commission Act 40 of 2013 (the SAHRC Act), the Commission has, over the years, held several investigative hearings and national inquiries that have contributed to the advancement of human rights. It has also litigated at various levels of the country's judicial system seeking appropriate redress for victims of human rights violations.

This anniversary thus provides the Commission and all within South Africa an opportunity to

reflect on the state of human rights in South Africa as well as the extent to which we have made progress in establishing a culture of human rights and addressed the challenges that still remain. The celebration of this milestone also reminds us to appreciate the extent to which the entrenchment of a culture of human rights is vital for the strengthening of our democracy as well as the stability and prosperity of our nation.

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Issued by the South African Human Rights Commission
Gushwell Brooks – Communications Co-ordinator Tel: 082 645 8573 gbrooks@sahrc.org.za