

## GETTING INVOLVED IN PARLIAMENT

Parliament is mandated by the Constitution to involve the public in its activities and processes. Young people are therefore urged to get involved in the work of Parliament.

There are different ways to access Parliament such as visiting Parliament on a guided tour, Parliament's website, [www.parliament.gov.za](http://www.parliament.gov.za), visit our mobile site on [m.parliament.gov.za](http://m.parliament.gov.za), follow us on twitter on @ParliamentofRSA and check our Facebook page for updates or "Subscribe" to Parliament's YouTube channel on [youtube.com/ParliamentofRSA](https://www.youtube.com/ParliamentofRSA).

To make Parliament more accessible, there is a programme called "Member's Interface" in which young people may meet with an individual Member of Parliament on issues pertinent to them. They can also make their voices heard through oral or written submissions.

The youth also form part of the public that can attend Committee Meetings where most of Parliament's work takes place, and they can attend sittings in order to observe, enrich and empower themselves.

In addition, Parliament has various initiatives aimed at Youth such as National Youth Parliament and Youth Round Table Discussions, which was a platform created by the Legislative Sector for the youth to share ideas, reflect on their future and propose solutions to the challenges confronting them. It provides young people with an opportunity to contribute towards identifying their roles and responsibilities in social cohesion and nation building as active citizens of South Africa. National Youth Parliament aims to:

- Commemorate the 1976 student uprising, which contributed significantly to the democratisation of South Africa;
- Provide a platform for to share historical experiences by the youth of 1976;
- Provide a platform for dialogue on key issues facing the youth of today;
- Create a space for collective reflection on the ideas on how to better capacitate and empower the youth of today;
- Raise awareness about the role of the Legislative Sector;
- Facilitate participation of the youth in the legislative and other processes of the Legislative Sector;
- Promote social cohesion;
- Ensure that the Legislative Sector debates matters affecting the youth and oversees the implementation of policies and laws affecting young people of South Africa; and
- Hold the Executive accountable.

## CONCLUSION

Parliament continues to celebrate youth every year on 16 June 2017 by recognising the role of the youth in the liberation of South Africa from the Apartheid regime, through various initiatives such as Youth Parliament and Youth Round Table Discussions, amongst other. As a nation, together we strive towards a non-racial society based on fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in a Constitution. Together we realise the objectives of the National Development Plan to build a better future for South Africa's Youth by creating better educational and economic opportunities for young people and focus efforts on eliminating gender inequality.

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# CELEBRATING SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH

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## BACKGROUND

June 16 commemorates the 1976 uprising that began in Soweto and spread nationwide which changed the socio-political landscape in South Africa. On this day, between 3000 – 10 000 black students marched peacefully to demonstrate and protest against the Bantu Education Act, established by the Apartheid Government in order to set a different curriculum for Black learners, unequal to their White counterparts and the compulsory introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of teaching.

However, as the students took to the streets of Soweto they were met by heavily armed police who fired teargas and later live ammunition on demonstrating students. This resulted in a widespread revolt that turned into an uprising against the Apartheid government.

Today, South Africa strives towards a non-racial society based on fundamental rights and freedoms entrenched in a Constitution aimed at promoting and protecting the human rights of all South Africans.

This year marks the 41st anniversary of this historic day as well as celebrating 20 years of the Constitution and 20 years since the establishment of the National Council of Provinces.

## CELEBRATING SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH

Parliament acknowledges that the Youth are the future leaders of our country hence legislation is geared towards enabling young people to reach their potential. The Youth are significantly affected by the unemployment, poverty, inequality and socio-economic challenges.

The National Development Plan (NDP) recognises that development and growth of the country is influenced by the levels of success in developing the capabilities and nurturing life chances of its youth. Highly skilled youth is better placed to put the country on a sound growth path and improve the capability of the state to deliver services to its people. The NDP recognises that youth plays a crucial role in the development of the country and acknowledges that South Africa has

a large youth and a working-age population, which is a critical stakeholder in creating a developmental and prosperous State.

The NDP aims to achieve the following amongst others:

- Improve the school system, including increasing the number of students achieving above 50 percent in literacy and mathematics, increasing learner retention rates to 90 percent and bolstering teacher training;
- Strengthen youth service programmes and introduction of new, community-based programmes to offer young people life-skills training, entrepreneurship training and opportunities to participate in community development programmes;
- Strengthen and expand the number of FET colleges to increase the youth participation rate to 25 percent;
- Increase the graduation rate of FET colleges to 75 percent;
- Provide full funding assistance covering tuition, books, accommodation and living allowance to students from poor families;
- Develop community safety centres to prevent crime and include youth in these initiatives;
- Implement payment of tax incentives to employers to reduce the initial cost of hiring young labour-market entrants;
- Pay subsidy to the placement sector upon successful placement of grade 12 graduates into work;
- Expand learnerships and making training vouchers directly available to job seekers;
- Introduce a formalised graduate recruitment scheme for the public service to attract highly skilled people; and
- Expand the role of state-owned enterprises in training artisans and technical professionals.

At continental level, Agenda 2063 aspires, amongst others, to people-driven development of Africa in which the potential of the youth is realised. This implies the development of a policy and legal environment

in which youth unemployment will be eliminated and the youth guaranteed full access to education, training, skills, technology, health services, jobs and economic opportunities. Agenda 2063 envisages a continent where young men and women will be the path breakers of the African knowledge society and will contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship. It further acknowledges that it is only through the continuous creation of sustainable opportunities that the potential of the youth would be fully realised.

## PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Parliament has committees such as the Portfolio Committee on Women, Children and People with Disabilities, and the Select Committee on Women, Children and People with Disabilities, which seek to deal with youth issues. These Committees are responsible for oversight on youth matters and must deal with legislation that affects young people.

Parliament in its overall mandate of making laws, has passed many laws like the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, 2003, the Skills Development Act 1998, and the Employment Equity Act.

South Africa adopted the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (NYP 2020) to consolidate youth initiatives that enhance the capabilities of young people to participate in the transformation of the economy and society. The main outcome of the NYP 2020 is to empower young people who are able to realise their full potential and understand their roles and responsibilities in making a meaningful contribution to the development of a non-racial, equal, democratic and prosperous South Africa.

In addition, the interest of Youth is championed by the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and it is governed by the National Youth Development Agency Act. It is a structure aimed at responding directly to the economic challenges faced by young people by establishing a platform for job creation, skills development and skills transfers for South African youth.

The following laws amongst others, affecting Youth have been passed in the past 20 years:

- Constitution
- National Youth Development Agency Act
- South African Schools Act
- Continuing Education and Training Act
- Higher Education Act
- Skills Development Act
- Employment Equity Act
- Broad-Based Black Empowerment Act

Parliament in its oversight role thus oversees the implementation of these laws to ensure enhanced service delivery and accountability. Parliament has established Portfolio and Select Committees to hold government accountable for the implementation of these laws, i.e. Portfolio Committees on Basic and Higher Education, Select Committee on Sport and Recreation and Education and Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.

## CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE CONSTITUTION AND 20 YEARS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa is celebrating 20 years since the adoption of our world class Constitution and 20 years of establishing the NCOP. The Constitution is the highest law of our land and it is our duty to uphold, defend and protect our Constitution. Every single South African citizen including youth has every reason to be proud of our Constitution.

The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) came into effect on 6 February 1997. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa paved the way for the introduction of the NCOP as the second House of Parliament. The Constitution specifies that the role of the NCOP is to represent the provinces to ensure that provincial interests are taken into account in the national sphere of Government. The NCOP is an important vehicle for the achievement of co-operative governance. It focuses on consultation, co-ordination, communication and developing partnerships among the national, provincial and local spheres of government.

The key objectives of the 20-year celebrations are to:

- Pay tribute to the political master-minds, negotiators and drafters (pioneers) of the Constitution;
- Celebrate two decades of South Africa's first democratic Constitution and the achievements in political, social and economic rights and freedoms, human rights and the rule of law for all South Africans;
- Foster greater patriotism and nation-building through renewed national momentum around the aspirations of the Constitution;
- Reinforce and remind the electorate of the significant transformational changes introduced by the Constitution, with a particular focus on the rights contained in the Bill of Rights; and
- Encourage dialogue and the sharing of experiences of what the adoption of the Constitution signified in the lives of the different generations.