

Statement by Sizwe Nxasana, Chairman of the Zenex Foundation, and Godwin Khosa, CEO of JET Education Services, 7 January 2013 in response to

Statement during the announcement of the 2012 National Senior Certificate Grade 12 Examination Results by Mrs Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, SABC Auditorium: 2 January 2013

The Zenex Foundation and JET Education Services (JET) congratulate the 2012 Grade 12 class and the Department of Basic Education on achieving the highest Senior Certificate pass rate since 1994.

The 2012 results indicate that there has been an increase in the number of learners that wrote and passed with diploma and university exemptions, signifying the steady improvement of the national education system. The signs of improvement are also observable in the results of the international comparative mathematics and primary reading studies, TIMMS and PIRLS, released by the University of Pretoria and Human Sciences Research Council in December.

Sizwe Nxasana, Chairman of The Zenex Foundation, and Godwin Khosa, CEO of JET, led the convenors committeeⁱ of the Education Leadership Dialogue that took place in Johannesburg on 6 December 2012. This is part of an ongoing national partnership initiative which Minister Motshekga referred to in her speech at the announcement of the 2012 results.

The Education Leadership Dialogue was attended by 40 civil society and government leaders, including several government ministersⁱⁱ and senior government officialsⁱⁱⁱ, and representatives of the academic^{iv}, labour, business and non-governmental sectors. The meeting agreed to develop and implement practical initiatives aimed at improving the coordination of stakeholder activities in support of the National Development Plan, and the Education Sector Plan in particular.

The participants, together with the 30 stakeholders interviewed in preparation for the Dialogue, identified six key themes around which a national partnership needs to be formed in order to provide this support. The themes include:

- *working with unions to transform their role in education;*
- *advocating for courageous leadership at the political and bureaucratic levels of the education system;*
- *improving the capacity of the state to deliver the development plan;*
- *professionalisation of the education civil service;*
- *resourcing schools; and*
- *supporting efforts to better coordinate the business sector's social investment in education.*

The meeting agreed to call on the nation to celebrate the achievements in education being registered on an on-going basis and recognise the efforts of many teachers who are achieving results despite challenging circumstances. It expressed concern at the pessimism that often pervades the reporting and public perception of the work of our teachers as a whole, due to the negative actions

of a few. It also recognised that the system takes time to improve and institutionalise the gains made.

We further call on the nation to make education a national mission. Every citizen should commit to constructively monitor and support learning, both in schools and the communities within which schools are situated. Households of all socio-economic standards need to make sure that every learner attends school, reads, and does homework every day. In the same way, Unions will encourage their members to support the initiative, Government will work with the private sector to provide resources, and Universities and NGOs will help to facilitate the process.

The next Dialogue will be convened in February 2013.

We envisage that we will reach an agreement in the near future with Government and the key role players in the partnership on 'the support menu' and the geographic areas in which activities will be initiated. Starting from February 2013, we will work with Government to convene a 'town-hall' gathering and several consultative meetings, and to initiate some specific development interventions in the six thematic areas cited above. The Dialogue will continue to play a catalytic role in creating apolitical and inclusive avenues for open, honest engagement among key education stakeholders such as the teacher unions, student organisations, civil society organisations, business and government, and to drive practical change programmes.

For more information or interviews with Sizwe Nxasana or Godwin Khosa please contact:

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The Zenex Foundation

The Zenex Foundation is an independent donor organisation that focuses on mathematics, science and language education. The Zenex Foundation has distinguished itself from other grant-making bodies by committing its entire budget strictly to the fields of mathematics, science and language education in South Africa. Since 1995, it has disbursed some R500-million in the South African education sector. The impact of this expenditure has been evaluated through extensive research and enquiry, and important lessons have been learnt about how donors can support the improvement of learner performance at school level.

JET Education Services

JET Education Services is an independent non-governmental organisation with its roots in the Joint Education Trust founded in 1993. JET's goal is to make a meaningful impact on improving the learning and teaching in schools and FET colleges so that learners receive quality education, giving them access to further opportunities. JET operates across the public education sector in South Africa, from grade R through to grade 12, and in further education and training (FET) colleges. The development and evaluation projects in which it is involved are focused in poor, marginalised and disadvantaged communities across the country. JET works with government, the private sector, international development agencies, and education institutions to improve the quality of education, and the relationship between education, skills development and the world of work. In pursuit of its vision of quality education for every child in South Africa, JET is actively involved in supporting initiatives of both government departments responsible for education and training.

ⁱ The Convening Committee consisted of: Mr Sizwe Nxasana, Mr Godwin Khosa, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Prof Irhon Rensburg, Ms Futhi Mtoba, Mr Thobile Ntola, and Mr Mugwena Maluleke.

ⁱⁱ Minister of Basic Education, Hon Angie Motshekga; Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Hon Enver Surty; Deputy Minister of Performance Monitoring, Hon Obed Bapela; MEC of Education in Gauteng, Hon Barbara Creecy; MEC of Education in Kwazulu-Natal, Hon Senzo Mchunu.

ⁱⁱⁱ Statistician General; Director General of Basic Education; and Deputy Directors General in the Planning Commission and Department of Basic Education.

^{iv} Dr Mamphela Ramphele