

STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF HEALTH DR JOE PHAAHLA ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW HEALTH OMBUD

Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla would like to announce that Professor Malegapuru W. Makgoba's term of office as the Health Ombud has come to an end as of the 31st May 2023. He was appointed Health Ombud by former Health Minister, now Minister of Home Affairs Dr Aaron Motsoaledi on the 1st of June 2016 for a non-renewable term of seven years.

The Health Ombud is an independent body established in terms of the National Health Amendment Act of 2013, with responsibility to protect and promote the health and safety of users of health services by considering, investigating, and disposing of complaints in the national health system relating to non-compliance with prescribed norms and standards.

The Health Ombud is located within the Office of Health Standards Compliance (OHSC), a schedule 3A public entity in terms of the PFMA. The mandate of the OHSC include, amongst others the responsibility to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made by the Health Ombud.

Professor Makgoba, since assuming office has displayed his patriotism and commitment to the creation of an improved healthcare service in the country, by impartially and with no favour or prejudice, investigating complaints brought to his office and made recommendations that are invaluable to the health system in the country. He was expectedly assisted by his long service and experience in the clinical care work, knowledge of the public service and the requisite needs of a better and durable healthcare system.

He was bestowed with a daunting task of establishing this office since he was the first South African Health Ombud, allowing the country to follow the good examples and practices of other countries in ensuring that our people receive an improved quality healthcare in a modernized health infrastructure.

Some of the major investigations conducted under his leadership include Life Esidimeni involving mental health patients, Tembisa Hospital and the recent

Rahima Moosa Mother & Child Hospital, which bear testimony to the intent to want to assist the government and the public to build the durable health system. Professor Makgoba did not only attend to high profile complaints but also spent huge amount of his term following on the complaints of ordinary people who visit our healthcare facilities.

South Africa and the healthcare system is greatly indebted to him, and his departure is a loss to the system that still require a huge overhaul and deep reform. Although, we are glad that he managed to set up systems which we believe his successor will be able to continue with good work he left behind.

The Ministry and Department hope that as he departs, he would not be completely lost from the healthcare system as it will continuously seek his advice and counsel as we proceed with the necessary reforms to build an affordable, accessible, and durable healthcare system.

It is my pleasure to announce that Professor Makgoba will be succeeded by Emeritus Professor Taole Resetselemang Mokoena with effect from the 1st of June 2023.

Professor Mokoena is one of the most outstanding South African medical scholars who has transcended the globe to show the quality the South Africans academic prowess. He is a medical graduate of the University of Natal, D.Phil graduate of University of Oxford and a fellow of Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. He recently retired as a Professor and Academic Head of Department of Surgery, Chief Surgeon of Department of General Surgery at University of Pretoria and Steve Biko Academic Hospital. But he continues his work on part-time or sessional basis to teach, train and supervise undergraduate and post-graduate medical students and research.

Prof Mokoena's clinical and research interests encompass immunology, oncology and endocrinology, and having previously been part of renal transplant unit in Universities of Natal and Witwatersrand. He is active in academic and professional leadership, having served at different times on a number of national and professional bodies like South African Medical Association, Health Professions Council of South Africa, Colleges of Medicine of South Africa, College of Surgeons of South Africa.

He was also appointed to chair a Panel for Investigation of Surgical Deaths at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in 1996/7 and the Panel of Inquiry into Discrimination within the Cardiology Department at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital.

This track record gives credence to his appointment as the new Health Ombud, armed with experience in investigations and inquiries in wrongdoing and injustices in the healthcare sector. We are confident that Professor Mokoena will execute his work with diligence and absolute sense of justice, eschewing impartiality and no prejudice to all.

The Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla and the Department of Health wish him success in his new responsibility and assure him of unparalleled support at all material times.