DISABLED PEOPLE YOUTH AFRICA (DYSA) DECLARATION ON THE OCCASION OF ITS INAUGURAL SUMMIT AND LAUNCH ON 28-29 NOVEMBER 2015 AT THE BIRCHWOOD HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTRE, BOKSBURG, JOHANNESBURG

STATEMENT

“Galvanizing our role for the advancement of a society accessible to all”

Disabled Youth South Africa (DYSA) convened its Inaugural Summit and Launch on 28-29 November 2015. We are grateful to the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) for partnering with us and its unwavering support towards this important historical gathering in the history of South Africa’s socio-political and economic landscape. In fact this gathering will over time galvanize all youth with disabilities in Africa towards the mantra of self-determination and self-representation.

Disabled Youth South Africa is the youth wing of the vanguard organisation for people with disabilities in South Africa; Disabled People South Africa (DPSA). Since its inception in 1984, DPSA has been the spear and shield of people with disabilities. It has successfully cut through many barriers that accosted people with disabilities and continue to be a shield protecting people with disabilities against systematic exclusions.

Dovetailing on the transformative role of DPSA; DYSA has a role to play in rallying youth with disabilities behind the ideological posture of DPSA; that of a society accessible to all.

We are 230 delegates representing membership from all the municipalities from across the length and breadth of South Africa. We espouse and are formed by the philosophy of cross-disabilities and as such, our summit is composed of all disabilities under the sun.

The summit engaged on amongst others:-

- Challenges and obstacles that prevent youth with disabilities from reaching their full potential.
- Access to employment and business opportunities by youth with disabilities.
- Knowledge and legislation for people with disabilities and global experiences.
- Access to Education.

Challenges and obstacles that prevent youth with disabilities

We are noting that;

1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is the supreme document guiding the interventions on various sectors by the State.

2. The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) is the Chief-Custodian of youth development in South Africa.
3. Youth development and disability are cross-cutting competencies that are embedded in the intersectional axis of exclusion and underdevelopment.

4. In all existing statistical data; there remain none that provides a proper depiction on the state of youth with disabilities in South Africa.

5. Both the private sector and non-governmental organisations have an important role in advancing the interests of youth with disabilities.

6. Ableism continue to even create self-doubt among disabled youth.

7. Young people enjoy all round rights including to reproductive health and sports.

We are further noting that:

8. Despite the Constitutional imperative of inclusion, youth with disabilities continue to be in the socio-economic and political wilderness.

9. In responding to its monumental mandate, the NYDA has developed an overarching Youth Policy (2015-2020).

10. Many departments continue to implement poorly coordinated and directionless interventions toward youth with disabilities.

11. The private sector narrowly perceive its role as funding those youth programmes that better appetize them. Most do not add value to the lives of people with disabilities, let alone youth with disabilities.

12. With its limited resources, Non-Governmental Organisations are at the heart of providing essential services and advocacy for the betterment of the lives of youth with disabilities.

13. Ableism refers to the othering of people with disabilities on the basis of their disabilities.

We therefore resolve that;

14. As DYSA, we lobby for the creation of a pinnacle point beyond Social Development that is tasked with the overall coordination of disability in South Africa.

15. Despite the fundamental weaknesses in the youth policy when it comes to disability; DYSA works creatively with NYDA in creating programmes that speaks to resolving our plight.

16. NYDA with DYSA in the absence of a Disability Pinnacle Point, work tirelessly in guiding programmes targeting youth with disabilities.

17. Non-governmental organisations and the private sector should be engaged to strengthen their programmes toward youth with disabilities.

18. People with disabilities have to learn about own disabilities and advance self-liberation.

19. Youth with disabilities should socialize with able bodied counterparts.
20. A culture of accountability among ourselves as leaders of youth with disabilities has to be inculcated.

**Access to employment and business opportunities by youth with disabilities**

We are noting that;

1. Youth will continue to live outside the first and second economies.

2. The South African government implements various strategies to move people out of poverty and further into the economic mainstream.

3. The NYDA implements a concoction of programmes aimed at the economic emancipation of young people with disabilities.

4. The Employment Equity Act is among the legislation that pronounces on the employment of people with disabilities.

5. The Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act is among the legislation that pronounces on the empowerment of the previously disadvantaged groups.

We are further noting that;

6. Data from all institutions, including the Statistician General, Human Science Research Council (HSRC) and Employment Equity Commission, continue to suggest of disabled people as a people entrenched in the economic periphery.

7. The NYDA in its recent parliamentary reporting session was asked a fundamental question on the participation and benefit derived by youth with disabilities in their programmes.

8. The country’s institutional framework on economic development seems to not have rigid focus on our member’s empowerment.

9. Our membership continues to be under-and non-educated and this has a bearing on both the employment and economic empowerment of youth with disabilities.

10. The government continues to embarrass itself by not meeting a mere 2% of employment of people with disabilities 21 years into democracy.

We therefore resolve that;

11. To approach all the institutions mandated to financially empower our people including the Land Bank, Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Small Business Development Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), Industrial Development Cooperation (IDC), National Empowerment Fund, National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and DFI’s in all provinces; with a structured plan to influence their discourse towards disabled people.
12. Education and training, as well as Skills development of disabled people should be the pinnacle point of our work. We must therefore rally all of efforts and collective wisdom toward the full equalisation of our education and training system.

13. DYSA as one of its first programme is to take to court a department that has not met its disability employment and empowerment target.

14. We fully lobby for the institutionalisation and programatisation of disability in the NYDA.

15. Positions earmarked for people with disabilities should be ring-fenced.

Knowledge and legislation for people with disabilities and global experiences

We are noting that;

1. The prevalence of disability in South Africa is still evasive.

2. Research plays an important role in our entire life as an organisation.

3. Knowledge management may have an important bearing on how society perceives disability.

4. The legislation in South Africa is solid for the mainstreaming of disability.

5. The South African, continental and international balance of forces have an impact in both the organisation and disabled people generally.

6. There are many organisations of youth organisations in South Africa and beyond.

7. It is society that disables us.

We are further noting that;

8. Current statistics on disability are disputed and may not be scientific.

9. The stigmatisation of disability may impact on the population’s declaration of their disabilities.

10. Progressive forces; both domestically and abroad provides us an opportunity to globally network and pledge solidarity

11. Other youth organisations do not necessarily embrace disability.

12. Despite the positive legislative environment, we remain peripheral

13. Impairments do not define us.

We therefore resolve that;

14. We must identify our members who should be empowered so that we are the first point of reference when it comes to the prevalence of disability in South Africa.
15. DYSA develops a research agenda.

16. DYSA identifies and partner with different research institutions with the view of influencing the research from the onset.

17. DYSA strengthens its international work and provide the necessary ideological disability leadership required in the country.

18. DYSA is to lobby other youth organisations for the mainstreaming of disability in their respective organisations and a creation of a youth-wide disability advancement cohort.

19. We become agents for the advancement of the implementation of the social model.

**Education, Skills development and Scholarship**

**We are noting that;**

1. Education and training are critical for the creation of economic empowerment and sustainable employment.

2. The White Paper No 6 continues to be under implemented.

3. The education system of South Africa is undergoing a general and consistent decline. This is even worse with some of our special schools.

4. The existence of the Green Paper on Higher Education and training provides us an opportunity to guide the country in the implementation of education and training.

5. The scholarship model currently rolled out in the country does not absorb disabled people to the maximum.

**We are further noting that;**

6. The lack of proper support to schools, teachers and our learners have a negative impact on our whole development.

7. Education must be the central rallying point for the organisation.

8. Some of the parties in the education and training development space may not have been thoroughly engaged with regards to our issues.

9. Organisations of disabled people working in education and training need to be provided full support by the organisation.

**We therefore resolve that;**

10. DYSA has to be seen in the forefront of advancing the education and training of youth with disabilities in South Africa.

11. There should be high investment towards the transport infrastructure which will aid people with disabilities in accessing education.
12. Rally the Minister of Education for the building of more special schools and the speedily implementation of Mainstream Schooling.

13. Provide support to disabled students at Universities and Colleges.

14. NSFAS should provide comprehensive support for students with disabilities.

15. We must implement serious disability political education for youth with disabilities.

Conclusion

1. Disabled Youth South Africa (DYSA) has been presented with a mammoth mandate of steering all young people with disability in South Africa towards enjoying the fruits of democracy.

2. This is a mandate we do not take lightly.

3. We are cognisant that the enjoyment of rights comes with responsibilities toward the Republic.

4. Like the many young people who positively contribute to their country’s economies, we too have that fundamental role towards South Africa.

5. It is a role we will play despite the structural barriers that exist.

6. When the hurly burly is done and battle won, we will pronounce;

“Nothing about us, without us”