

## MEDIA STATEMENT

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### **SALGA WELCOMES THE DECISION TO DECLARE A NATIONAL DISASTER TO COORDINATE THE RESPONSE ON THE IMPACT OF FLOODS**

***Further calls for Disaster Management Centres to be on high alert for potential heavy rains accompanying Cyclone Freddy***

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The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has noted with concern and grief the magnitude and severity of the impact of the severe weather conditions which occurred in the form of heavy rainfall that led to flooding in 7 out of the 9 provinces of South Africa in the recent weeks. The events sadly resulted in the loss of life, and livelihoods and damage to property, infrastructure and the environment as a result of heavy precipitation, flooding, strong winds, and landslides.

SALGA further welcomes the decision to classify and declare a national state of disaster in terms of the Disaster Management Act of 2002. This is important to enable an intensive, coordinated response to the impact of floods that are affecting Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Northern Cape, and North West.

SALGA Chairperson of the National Working Group on Emergency Services and Disaster Management Cllr Mluleki Nkosi says: "SALGA acknowledges the efforts of the National Joint Flooding Coordinating Committee (NJFCC) led by the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC), Provincial Disaster Management Centres (PDMCs) to bring all the sector departments and parastatals to support municipalities affected by floods. However, we note with great concern the challenges faced by municipalities to respond rapidly to the state of emergency and disasters due to lack of capacity, resources and severe limitations of risk reduction strategies to strengthen disaster preparedness measures".

Cllr Nkosi reiterated that it was important that Government relook the fundamental issues gripping the country's disaster management which have a potential of rendering it ineffective. Disaster response requires urgent and well-coordinated action by national, provincial and local government. Currently, the country is not geared to take mitigative measures to avoid huge loss of life and damage to infrastructure upon receiving warnings about potential disasters. For example, all what we are able to do is to inform the communities to be alert about potential disasters, however, we do not have the necessary evacuation measures in place to remove them from areas that may be impacted. There is also no measures in place to protect infrastructure, e.g. establishing embankments, flood protection berms, hydrological settings etc.

SALGA believes that disaster management funding arrangements must be overhauled and be geared towards supporting municipalities to implement measures to prevent and mitigate potential heavy rains accompanying Cyclone Freddy and the likelihood of loss of life and severe damage to infrastructure upon receiving an early-warning disaster alert. This should include capacitating municipalities to implement emergency pre-emptive and risk-reduction measures.

The South Weather Services has issued warnings that will likely affect the north-eastern parts of South Africa, particularly the lowveld and escarpment areas of Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces from early Saturday the 25th until Monday the 27th of February.

Cllr Mluleki Nkosi urges municipal disaster management teams to be on standby with their emergency services and be on the alert and further calls for the National and Provincial Disaster Management Centres to prioritize support for municipal disaster management centres and emergency services placed on high alert and to ensure that disaster preparedness plans are in order including improving readiness for possible evacuations. SALGA also encourages disaster teams to build temporary flood embankment, levees, flood diversion drainage channels and also stockpile sandbags as contingency interventions to eliminate all forms of risks associated with the flooding.

“We also call all sector departments, partners, civil society and private sector to work in partnership with municipalities towards improving interventions to enhance disaster risk prevention and response actions. We have noted that even though there is often initially a good intergovernmental response to the disasters, previous experiences have indicated that municipalities and communities are left alone to deal with post-disaster recovery, the recent disasters in the KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape, and Gauteng being the latest examples,” says Cllr Nkosi.

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