STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, DR NOBUHLE NKABANE ON THE OCCASION OF THE NSFAS 2025 APPLICATIONS OFFICIAL OPENING HELD AT THE GCIS TSHEDIMOSETSO - PRETORIA

20 September 2024

Programme Director Mr Ishmael Mnisi
Director-General: Dr Nkosinathi Sishi
NSFAS Administrator: Mr Freeman Nomvalo
All DDGs present
NSFAS Executive Management and Staff
The leadership of our all our institutions
Leadership of our student organisations
Members of the media;
Our Special guests today: the Leaners;
Fellow South Africans

Good morning

Today I am delighted to officially open the National Student Financial Aid Scheme opening of the 2025 Application process. It is of great importance that I outrightly announce that 2025 application season commences today, 20th September 2024 and will close on 15th December 2024. Today as I am launching this application season here in Pretoria – and we have invited learners from various schools around Tshwane to come and apply for funding assisted by the NSFAS servicing administrators and officials.

Not only is the live application process done here Tshwane, but we are also to all the provinces of our country targeting townships and rural schools:

- In Limpopo we are at Esther Maleka Comprehensive School
- In the Free State we are at Ntsu Secondary School
- In the North West we are at Realeka Secondary School
- In KwaZulu Natal we are at Edendale Technical High School
- In the Northern Cape we are at Emang Mmogo Comprehensive School
- In the Eastern Cape we are at Ikhala TVET College
- In Gauteng we are at Thubelihle High School
- In Mpumalanga we are at Sophungane Secondary School; and
- In the Western Cape we are at Usasazo High School.

Let me take this opportunity to thank all the schools and our TVET colleges that accepted our invitation to participate in this launch. NSFAS will continue to have outreach programme in all provinces, targeting our rural and township communities.

It is importance that I convey our best wishes as the department to our important guests: the learners, gathered here with us today, and to all other matriculants who will be sitting for their final examination next month. I therefore implore on all students who wish to study in any of the public universities and TVET Colleges to apply timeously and not to wait until the last day. Learners do not have to wait for matric results to apply for NSFAS. Apply now and avoid delays in the processing of your application!

In 2019, our government spending on education as a proportion of overall government expenditure was 22.7% in 2019/20 and 7.2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), far exceeding the benchmarks set by UNESCO, which recommends allocating 15-20% of public spending to education and 4-6% of GDP to education.

Since its inception, NSFAS has supported more than five million beneficiaries, producing hundreds of thousands of skilled professionals and the middle class, especially from within the poor and working-class sections of our society. Those are the motive forces that must be mobilised to contribute to the ongoing transformation of our country. The social transformation entails changing the material conditions of all South Africans for the better and education plays a vital role in ensuring that this becomes a reality. NSFAS has

been an instrumental vehicle in making sure that we produce the necessary labour force for a capable state.

This year alone, NSFAS is supporting about 1,2 million students, and this number is anticipated to grow in 2025. This demonstrates the role that the scheme has played in trying to change the structural colonial apartheid system that we have inherited, whose legacy persists even in the 30 years of democracy. NSFAS is the only tool we have at our disposal for the total liberation of children of historically oppressed people.

As from this year, we have also decided to introduce measures to support students who are currently not supported by the NSFAS bursary and funding policy. We successfully did this through the implementation of the first phase of the Comprehensive Student Funding Model, which ensures that the missing middle students access financial support from government in a form of a loan to pursue their studies.

Government also continues to find mechanisms to ensure no one is excluded from post school education and training opportunities due to lack of funding. Work on other bursary and scholarship funding in the university sector shows that about 161, 292 students in the public university system received bursaries from sources other than NSFAS.

As we gradually implement our Comprehensive Funding Model, we will continue to work with all funding stakeholders to ensure that we consolidate these multiple bursary schemes to ensure that we have a consolidated and efficient loan and bursary system in South Africa.

The NSFAS bursary is open to all South African citizens and permanent residents with a combined household income of not more than R350, 000 per annum. With this financial support, SASSA grant recipients automatically qualify for funding. The NSFAS bursary covers the cost of Registration, Tuition, Learning Material, Living Allowance, Personal Care, Transport or Accommodation. It is important for me to emphasise the point that NSFAS will continue to make immediate funding decisions for SASSA First Time Entering (FTEN) students.

The NSFAS loan scheme is meant for students who come from families who have a total income of more than R350, 000, but not more than R600, 000 per annum. I therefore urge students to provide accurate information particularly parental information when applying so that when validations occur with Home Affairs students can be funded timeously.

I now hand over to the NSFAS Administrator to take us through the technicalities of the application process.

I thank you.