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## Press Statement on xenophobic attacks going on in South Africa

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Following the recent and ongoing xenophobic attacks in Durban, following hard after Vuwani in Limpopo, and not so long-ago Mpumalanga, we are compelled to issue a statement strongly condemning the violation of the fundamental rights of migrants in the country. The National Action Plan (NAP) launch on Monday the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2019 is seen as a milestone in the attempt to deal with hate crime and hate speeches which follows the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) presented in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA, 2001) in August to September of 2001.

This has been a long journey but indeed a welcome gesture by the government following the approval and endorsement of the NAP by cabinet last month. The President of the Republic of South Africa, on Wednesday 26/03/2019 in a meet the people and community event with the Hellenic, Italian and Portuguese communities (the HIP Alliance), stated that the bill on hate crimes is before parliament to deal with hate crimes and the sanctions thereof. This is a clear desire and intention by the South African legislature to deal with all forms of hate crime and section 3(l)(k) particularly deals with nationality, migrant or refuge status as a ground or characteristic or perceived characteristics for the hatred.

We as the migrant community welcome this development and understand that some of the victimisation of the migrants is not government policy but the mere corruption and exploitation of the vulnerable by those in office, like the police, immigration officers or Home affairs officials, those implementing the laws and policies. Such corrupt tendencies also affect the native South Africans in various ways and we need to team up as people living in South Africa to rid our society of these corrupt tendencies and in his address to the HIP community President Ramaphosa stated that his mandate was to fight corruption vigorously.

We stand together with the President on his sentiments in respect to corruption and we note that not all South African citizens are xenophobic maybe not even a tenth of native South Africans are, on the

same note not all legislators and leaders are not xenophobic, as a result we need to condemn or point blame to where it belongs. We need to speak with one voice to fight tendencies that make our societies and communities unsafe and angry. Migrants are a very vulnerable part of society that needs the authorities to be very sensitive to such vulnerabilities and be able to protect them and ensure that those breaking the law by attacking them, attacking their property are brought to book to face the law like any other criminals unlike laying the blame with the victims.

The current xenophobic spats are most likely as a result of the hate speeches that are being paddled by politicians trying to buy votes than earn them based on sensible and respectable campaign promises. We cannot condone the use of hate speech to be the anchor of electioneering and find society to be progressive. The politicians that want to capitalise on the cheap populism of promising the electorate that by getting rid of migrants, the economy will have more jobs, crime will be lessened, are indeed lost and ill-advised. The role of migrants in creating jobs, providing essential services, provision of scarce skills, FDI, is ignored by these myopic views and this is a fault of lack of understanding and must be understood in that light and unfortunately such ignorance is very expensive and mainly costed in terms of human life which is unacceptable. The law must come to play to ensure that this is prevented particularly in terms of the cost of human life.

We have information pointing to the death of a person(s) and injury to some due to the unrest in Durban and we need to emphasise that loss of life is very regrettable and cannot be condoned whether this be migrant life or native South African life and this needs proactive government intervention to encourage peaceful co-existence of migrant and native communities to be integrated and exist as one South African community fighting crime and social ills as a single South African rainbow community. This will help prevent such loss of life and the law must also be allowed to take its course where ever it has been offended upon.

We urge the police to act decisively when called to xenophobic hot spots which could even be opportunistic criminally activities taking advantage of the political hype created by the xenophobic sentiments of some politicians and we also understand the strain on national resources like the shortage of police officers as alluded to by the President as informed by the police minister, we understand all these dynamics, and call for preventative measures and working with the migrant communities to set up warning measures and system to curb and deal decisively with anyone flouting the law from native South African communities or from migrant communities without favour.

In closing we call upon all peace-loving South Africans to work with migrant communities to help protect them from those seeking to attack or take advantage of them or even those in the migrant community denting the name of others by engaging in criminal activities. We call upon all leaders to

lead in blaming and condemning these acts of xenophobia and pledge to be on the fore-fronting in fighting the crime of xenophobia.

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The End