

Media Release for the Third National Schools Moot Court Competition January 2013 - August 2013

The third National Schools Moot Court Competition will take place from January 2013–August 2013. In the first phase of the Competition, legal professionals are encouraged to assist schools with preparations for the Competition by way of offering workshops for groups of schools, and availing themselves to specific schools. Norton Rose Attorneys offered to conduct two workshops early in February; one in KwaZulu-Natal and the other in Gauteng. More than four hundred learners, educators, and Department of Basic Education officials attended the two workshops. Webber Wentzel attorneys conducted a workshop in Potchefstroom middle February for a substantive group of learners. Workshops were also offered by legal professionals in other areas of Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Western Cape and North West Province in February. In total more than a thousand learners were exposed to the Constitution and the basic rules of participating in a moot court competition. We hope to educate even more learners on the values of the Constitution in the following months.

The Competition is aimed at creating greater awareness of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, and the values that it embodies. The focus will be on schools and communities. We hope to educate communities on the duties as well as the rights enshrined in the Constitution. The moot is an excellent vehicle to raise awareness.

All secondary schools in South Africa are invited to enter a team of two learners, preferably one male and one female. A fictional problem involving a constitutional issue is set. Learners are expected to write two short essays setting out the opposing sides of the case. The essays will be evaluated by a panel of experts. The best nine submissions in each of the nine provinces will be identified and the selected learners will be invited to participate in person in the provincial oral rounds, in the nine provinces, in May and June 2013. The National Rounds will take place in August in Pretoria.

The Schools Moot provides a singular opportunity for the entire legal profession of the country to be engaged with the promotion of the Constitution and of the role of the law in our society. Practicing attorneys, advocates, magistrates, law graduates, law clinics, and university lecturers and students are reaching out to schools in their neighbourhood and encouraging them to participate – and are providing assistance to the learners who are interested in participating in the Competition. We would like to encourage all law students and legal professionals to join the outreach initiative.

The Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Mr Enver Surty, emphasised the significance of the Moot Court in educating the youth, as he contended, “While we have a first class Bill of Rights which we could be proud of there were still many constitutional challenges to be taken on. The youngsters were the future of the country and it was up to them to take on these challenges, whether they one day decided to become lawyers or politicians or pursued other careers. Through the Constitution we strive towards equality for all whether it be in terms of race, gender or class”.

The Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mr Andries Nel confirmed the importance of an event of this nature, as he emphasised the following, "We hope that through initiatives such as this Moot Court Competition we have begun a process to build unity and harmony between the different and diverse sections of South African society by promoting, protecting and appreciating the constitutional values. That indeed we have laid the groundwork for the ongoing realisation of all South Africans".

The South African Constitution lies at the heart of our democratic project. However, while the merits of the Constitution and of the work of the Constitutional Court are widely recognised, there is also a growing awareness that more work has to be done to ensure that the Constitution – and the legal system as a whole – these are living realities in communities throughout the country. The Constitution's ability to define the basic rules of interaction in our diverse society will depend on the extent to which its values are instilled in successive generations of our citizens.

The Universities of Pretoria, Venda, the Western Cape, CLASI at the University of Cape Town, and the Departments of Justice and Constitutional Development and Basic Education, the South African Human Rights Commission and the Foundation for Human Rights will be presenting the third annual National Schools Moot Court Competition for senior learners (grade 11 and 12 in 2013) in all secondary schools in South Africa.

For more details on the competition, please see www.up.ac.za/law. Alternatively contact the organiser, Cheryl Botterill, at cherryl.botterill@gmail.com for more information.