**Address by the National Commissioner of the South African Police Service, General Bheki Cele at the SANEF AGM, Cape Town, 16 September 2011**

Since the release of the annual crime statistics on 8 September 2011, we, in the SAPS, have been enjoying, arguably, our best run of uninterrupted good media coverage since our formation in 1995.

Naturally, our hope was that you guys would keep the pats that you have been raining on our shoulders coming for, at least, another twelve months.

Sadly though, we knew that it was highly unlikely that this would happen as we know only too well that throwing curveballs at us is so ingrained in your psyche that, sometimes, you do it even when it is the opposite of what you would have originally intended to do.

An example of this is your decision to hold your AGM in the Western Cape – one of only two provinces that were subsequently found to have recorded overall increases in their crime statistics for the past financial year.

This means that, having accepted your invitation to address this gathering, we now find ourselves in a situation where we cannot help but confront the gloomy reality that our work is far from being done.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on a serious note, on behalf of the SAPS, I would like to thank you for the support you continue to give us as we go about the task of ridding South Africa of the scourge of crime.

I am particularly grateful for the fact that, as a collective, you did not allow the few issues that some within your ranks had with me, personally, over the past year to dissuade you from continuing to help the SAPS communicate its crime-fighting message to the public out there.

Of course, until the finalisation of the processes that are currently underway elsewhere to determine if am, indeed, guilty of all that I have been accused of, those allegations will always loom large like the proverbial elephant in the room whenever we meet on occasions such as this one.

Be that as it may, I trust that you will respect my wishes not to be drawn into a discussion about these allegations at this point in time.

The only concession I am at liberty to make in view of your understandable curiosity to hear me out on these allegations is to recap on my previous comments thereon, most of which have already been corroborated by the findings of the recently concluded Public Protector’s investigation:

1. The SAPS genuinely needs new offices in Pretoria and Durban;
2. The delays in securing these new offices severely compromises the organisation’s ability to deliver an effective service to the public;
3. I did not sign any lease agreement for SAPS offices, either with Roux Shabangu’s company or any other company;
4. I had no prior contact with Shabangu prior to him being appointed by the Department of Public Works as the SAPS landlord in Pretoria;
5. I do not have a relationship, proper or improper, with Shabangu;
6. I am not aware of any corrupt or unlawful conduct on the part of any individual who was involved in the stalled processes to procure new office leases for the SAPS in Pretoria and Durban;
7. I am ultimately responsible for all the administrative bungles that were committed by SAPS officials in managing the processes of procuring new office leases for the organisation in Pretoria and Durban;
8. As inexcusable as these bungles may be, they should be viewed within the context of the regrettable reality that, over the years, they had come to be erroneously accepted as correct operating procedure within the organisation AND
9. Steps have already been taken to address the many institutional weaknesses that gave rise to these administrative bungles.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me reiterate that this is all I will be saying on this matter pending the finalisation of the processes I referred to earlier.

Now, going back to the question of the relationship between the SAPS and the media, as good as this may be, I believe it can still be improved upon.

In response to feedback received from your representatives on the SAPS/SANEF Task Team, we have put plans in place to ensure that, as from the beginning of October this year, the SAPS media centre will remain open twenty-four hours a day. Over and above its mandate to handle all national-level enquiries, the media centre will also be primarily responsible for coordinating responses to all province-level media enquiries after normal working hours.

The SAPS is also currently busy developing guidelines for operating a dedicated SAPS Twitter account through which we hope to disseminate more information updates to the media, more timeously.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please allow me to register our disappointment that whilst we are at pains to address the many concerns that you bring to our attention, it does not appear that the favour is being reciprocated.

According to our representatives on the SAPS/SANEF Task Team, when they tried to raise certain concerns about the conduct of some SANEF member we found to be unbecoming, they were told, in no uncertain terms, that SANEF could not take this matter up with the member concerned.

Naturally, we find this extremely disconcerting.

If SANEF cannot or will not intervene on our behalf to get one of its members to abide by the resolutions taken during our deliberations, then what is the point of having the SAPS/SANEF Task Team?

If SANEF will not help us to put a stop to the rising tendency by some Sunday newspapers to ambush our members with SMS enquiries late on a Saturday afternoon asking them to respond within a matter of minutes, then what is the point of coming to address SANEF gatherings such as this one?

We attend meetings with SANEF because we believe these offer a unique opportunity to strike binding agreements with the bosses of the newsrooms we interact with on a daily basis to find lasting solutions to the many problems we encounter as we go about doing our work.

We come here to foster a closer working relationship between the police and the media.

This to avoid situations such as that which currently obtains where, for instance, the media regularly approaches all our civil society and business partners in the fight against crime, but not the police themselves, for their insights on certain crime trends.

Inasmuch as we value and appreciate the input of our civil society and business partners in the fight against crime, the fact still remains that the police happen to be the people who live, eat and dream the fight against crime on a daily basis.

With all due respect, we believe that there is a lot we can share with you with the view of improving the quality of the crime reports that you publish.

Take the rising crime trend of people who are robbed on their way from making large cash withdrawals from banks, for instance. What you are not likely to hear from the South African Banking Risk Information Centre but which you can hear from us is that this trend is driven, mainly, by two factors that the police cannot do much about:

Collusion between criminals and bank staff as well as the fact that the money that all too often gets ‘stolen’ during these robberies happens to be insured by the companies that send their employees to collect these large cash withdrawals. We have many more such insights to share.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we also come to SANEF in the hope that we can persuade the organisation to help us educate the public about the totality of the human rights regime that forms the bedrock of our constitutional democracy, especially insofar as the right to protest is concerned.

I must confess that I am still envious of the outpouring of support that the British media directed at the members of the Metropolitan police during the recent riots in London.

There I saw media practitioners who were firmly and unapologetically on the side of law and order. I saw media practitioners who did not hesitate to tell protesters that their right to protest does not equal the right to victimise others and commit criminal acts with impunity.

Today, my special plea to you is, please take a stand and tell South Africa that those who wreak havoc on our streets during public protests will, henceforth, be treated like criminals and not protesters.

For my part, I can assure you that, any future violent protests on the streets of our country will be met with what the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, famously referred to as “robust policing”.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I know that, in the aftermath of the presentation of the crime statistics, the questions that most of you are most eager to ask are, where to from here? What does the SAPS intend to do reverse the rising crime trends in the Western Cape and the Northern Cape?

How does the SAPS intend to improve the performance of the worst-performing police stations in the country whilst ensuring that the best-performing police stations continue to improve? Can crime in Gauteng be reduced any further without displacing it to other provinces?

The answers to these questions will become clearer, as from next week, when my management team and I will begin a series of visits to all the country’s nine provinces. These visits will target the worst, average and best-policing areas in the country to seek answers from local police management and the surrounding communities as to what they believe is needed to take the fight against crime to the next level.

These visits will coincide with the rollout of the festive season crime-fighting plan that we launched in Thokoza the day before yesterday. Lessons learned from our engagements during these visits will be fed through our monthly senior management forum meetings with the result that they will be incorporated into our overall crime-fighting plan.

The message to criminals, here, is simple – we are not about to let up in our quest to squeeze the space for criminals to operate to zero.

The fundamental objective our crime-fighting plan is to reduce the levels of:

1. Crimes against women and children (particularly rape and domestic violence);
2. Serious and violent crimes (by between 4-7% over the next four years);
3. Organised crime (in particular house robberies, business robberies, car hijackings and ATM bombings);
4. Substance abuse and the proliferation of illegal firearms AND
5. Environmental crimes (such as rhino-poaching).

Our crime-fighting plan is underpinned by the general policing strategy that I shared with you when I took on this responsibility of leading the SAPS.

That strategy, for those who may have forgotten, entails prioritising the development of operational infrastructure, investing in cutting-edge technological capacity and training the members of the SAPS to be experts in their respective policing roles.

To this end, we intend to:

1. Increase levels of visible policing (specifically targeting identified stations where specific crimes and tendencies contribute most to the overall crime situation in SA);
2. Improve service delivery at station level (including building more police stations across the country, improving the conditions at our existing police stations some of which lack such basic services as electricity and sanitation, expanding sector policing, improving police response times, rolling-out detective service centres, increasing staff levels at stations, placing units closer to where they belong – such as stock theft units);
3. Strengthen specialized units (such as the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit, Stock Thefts Unit, etc) by allocating more resources, human capital and infrastructure, to these;
4. Upgrade and enhance initiatives which add considerable strategic value in the fight against crime (such as the operation of a dedicated war room and the establishment of a dedicated tracking teams);
5. Enhance the SAPS’ detective and intelligence-gathering capacity;
6. Enhance the SAPS’ forensic capacity (collection, timeous processing and storing of evidence);
7. Implement a Property Control Exhibit Management system and a Detention Management system that will also assist our partners in criminal justice system to better manage court processes;
8. Improve the capacity of the Criminal Record Centre (improving the speed with which the database of offenders is updated so as to help reduce the high number of repeat offenders who are granted bail);
9. Migrate to an electronic docket management systems (E-dockets);
10. Rope in the country’s metro police forces in certain crime-fighting operations (force-multipliers) as well as conduct integrated operations alongside our partners in the criminal justice cluster;
11. Increase the number of Tactical Response Teams in the country;
12. Step-up the mobilisation of all sectors of society in the fight against crime (strengthening community policing forums, partnerships with business, the media, the youth – through initiatives such as the Junior Provincial Commissioner programme. etc);
13. Take decisive steps to combat police corruption (internally and externally by rolling out an anti-corruption strategy, properly vetting new recruits, subjecting police officers to regular fingerprint-test, obtaining DNA samples from police officers, regular ballistic-testing of police firearms);
14. Improve border management (including regional cooperation);
15. Improve the police’s capacity to respond to extraordinary public disorder events;
16. Conduct intelligence-driven operations (focus on syndicates and “targeted approach”) AND
17. Double up on our efforts to build a professional police force by training and re-skilling our members to prevent incidents like the one that took place in Pretoria yesterday where four officers were relieved of their fire-arms by a small group of criminals in broad daylight;

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is all I am able to squeeze into the time I have been allocated for my address today. I do, however, hope that this conversation will continue in other fora such that one would be able to further elaborate on some of the issues raised in this address.

Once again, thank you for the support you have given to the SAPS this past year. As they say in this part of the world, Nangamso!