

At a recent meeting held at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth the South African Law Deans' Association, composed of the deans of all law faculties and law schools at South African universities, resolved to make the statement below.

Statement on Concerns and Public Responsibilities regarding the Role and Rule of Law in South Africa

- **Recognising** the adverse impact of recent events and rhetoric in the public domain affecting legal institutions and the role of law;
- **Recognising** further the opportunities presented by a new phase in the evolution of our constitutional democracy;
- **Affirming** its commitment to the constitutional dispensation and the role of the courts and institutions created thereby and the role of law in our society as an instrument of transformation, and
- **Affirming** the importance of law as a mechanism for the ordering and progressive development of society and the supremacy of the Constitution as the framework for political processes,

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Calls on politicians, lawyers and other role-players to accept their collective responsibility to maintain and enhance the effective functioning of the legal system and to promote public respect for its institutions and processes, in particular: the judiciary, the Judicial Service Commission, the Chapter 9 institutions and the National Prosecuting Authority;

Cautions against public discourse which undermines the significant gains made in the establishment of our constitutional democracy;

Reaffirms the commitment of the deans of law to the values and principles embedded in our legal system in terms of the Constitution;

Asserts the importance of legal education for the proper functioning of the legal system;

Affirms our responsibility to produce lawyers with the necessary analytical skills, critical disposition and independence of thought to play a meaningful role in the further development of our society, and

Calls upon all legal educators and stakeholders to exert their energies to these ends.

Issued by Professor Francois Venter
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13 May 2009
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This statement is also subscribed to by the Council of the Society of Law Teachers of Southern Africa

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