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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2017**

**NATIONAL EDUCATION CRISIS FORUM ROLLS-OUT PROVINCIAL ENGAGEMENT SCHEDULE**

*JOHANNESBURG*: The Higher Education Crisis Forum (The Forum) today announced the roll out of provincial engagements fromFriday, 17 February 2017. The main objective of the provincial engagements is to provide opportunity for stakeholders at provincial level, to deliberate on the matters to be considered at the Higher Education National Convention and provide their contributions.

The Forum is a civil society initiative, convened by former Deputy Chief Justice, Dikgang Moseneke and nine Co-Convenors from various backgrounds, who have been involved with education in South Africa at various levels, and who have been specifically engaged with the current crisis unfolding at universities. The Forum aims to provide all affected parties in the current tertiary education crisis with a platform for dialogue, and assist in facilitating engagements towards sustainable policy outcomes.

“We have taken a decision to respond to the need identified by various stakeholders for greater focus onprovincial engagementsprior to the Convention. We will therefore spend time with higher education stakeholders at provincial level, discussing the Work Streams as we prepare for the Higher Education National Convention. In the process we expect that the immediate challenges will also come up for consideration,” said Justice Dikgang Moseneke, Chairperson of The Forum. The challenges relate, in the main, to students being effectively excluded from the 2017 academic programme for reasons related to a range of financial issues, internal disciplinary processes, legal proceedings, and inability to accessuniversity student accommodation.

“Together with our partners HEParD and SAUSNet, and the provincial structures of the SACC, we will be facilitating the provincial engagements. We trust that all stakeholders will be open to engaging in accordance with the principles that guide our work. These principles include:Peaceful mediation and resolution of disputes with all parties refraining from the use of violence;Zero tolerance of racism and gender discrimination;Sufficient representation based on constituencies;Sufficient consensus building through democratic engagement and respect for divergent perspectives;Disciplined collective action through democratic deliberation and mandated leadership; and Dialogue with state, universities, students and concerned parties,” he said.

“At the provincial engagements, stakeholders will share their views on the Work Streams that address the issues of: Registration; Funding Models; Peace and Mediation; Higher Education Access and Massification; Transformation; Student Accommodation; and Policy and Legislative Changes. In order to expand opportunity for meaningful engagement, the Forum has taken a decision to move the date of the Higher Education National Convention to 18 -19 March 2017,” he added. This adjustment from the initially announced date of 25 – 26 February opens up three additional weeks for stakeholder engagements.

The meetings in the provinces have been scheduled as follows:

* **Gauteng:** Friday 17 February 2017
* **Limpopo**: Friday 17 February 2017
* **Eastern Cape**: Friday 17 February 2017
* **North West** Saturday, 11 February 2017
* **Free State**: Thursday 23 February 2017
* **Western Cape**: Friday 24 February 2017
* **Mpumalanga**: Friday 24 February 2017
* **Northern Cape**: Saturday 25 February 2017

The KwaZulu-Natal provincial engagement took place on Saturday, 4 February 2017.

**ENDS**

***Editors’ Notes***

For media engagement in each province, please contact:

Khuthalani Khumalo

khuthalanikhumalo@icloud.com

084 074 1285