PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 18TH MARCH 2013

PRESIDENT OF DOWN SYNDROME INTERNATIONAL TO SPEAK AT THE UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK ON 21ST MARCH 2013 (WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY)


President of Down Syndrome International (DSI) Mrs Vanessa dos Santos together with many Self Advocates will be speaking on the ‘Right to Work’ at this conference.

There is an estimated 7 million people with Down syndrome throughout the world that face physical, intellectual and social challenges and are discriminated against. Because of this discrimination Down Syndrome Organisations across the globe try and dispel the many myths and stigma associated with the condition by hosting various awareness events on and around this day.

Mrs. dos Santos said “We are pleased to have this special day dedicated to people with Down syndrome by the United Nations. People with Down syndrome and their families are discriminated against on a daily basis. Because of this, many are unable to access basic services or employment. This day will help to raise awareness around the abilities of people with Down syndrome and change society’s perception around the condition. We aim to create a society for all”.

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More about World Down Syndrome Day
World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) is observed on 21 March. On this day, people with Down syndrome and those who live and work with them throughout the world organise and participate in activities and events to raise public awareness and create a single global voice for advocating for the rights, inclusion and well being of people with Down syndrome.

The date for WDSD being the 21st day of the 3rd month, was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication (trisomy) of the 21st chromosome
which causes Down syndrome. WDSD was first observed in 2006 in many countries around the world.

On 19 December 2011, the United Nations General Assembly declared 21 March as World Down Syndrome Day. The General Assembly decided to "designate 21 March as World Down Syndrome Day, to be observed every year beginning in 2012;" and "invites all Member States, relevant organizations of the United Nations system and other international organizations, as well as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to observe World Down Syndrome Day in an appropriate manner, in order to raise public awareness of Down syndrome;".

The Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon said on 21 March 2012 "On this day, let us reaffirm that persons with Down syndrome are entitled to the full and effective enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Let us each do our part to enable children and persons with Down syndrome to participate fully in the development and life of their societies on an equal basis with others. Let us build an inclusive society for all."

Since 2011, Down Syndrome International (DSi) has co-ordinated the World Down Syndrome Day website and the WDSD Global Video Event "Let Us In!". In 2012, DSi organised the first WDSD UN Conference held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA on 21 March which was sponsored by the Brazilian Mission and Polish Mission to the United Nations, UN Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and UNICEF and was organised in collaboration with the Brazilian Federation of Associations of Down Syndrome, Down España, National Down Syndrome Congress, National Down Syndrome Society, Down Syndrome Research and Treatment Foundation, and Global Down Syndrome Foundation. DSi also announces the World Down Syndrome Day Awards every year on 21 March.

Join our cause to create a single global voice for advocating for the rights, inclusion and well being of people with Down syndrome on 21 March.

INFORMATION ON DOWN SYNDROME FOR MEDIA – Editors notes

The section has been developed for specific use by the media. Very often incorrect information about Down syndrome is given and this can reflect negatively on the condition. We therefore encourage you to use the UP TO DATE information on our website www.downsyndrome.org.za/main.aspx?artid+86 as well as the guidelines below.
"WE CANNOT AFFORD TO UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE AND POWER OF OUR WORDS"
Down syndrome is not a disease or illness and is therefore not contagious. It
is a condition; Although it cannot be cured, people with Down syndrome
benefit from loving homes, appropriate medical care, early intervention,
education and vocational services.
Babies, children and adults with Down syndrome have the same needs and
range of feelings as any one else does;
Always refer to a person with Down syndrome as the person first and not the
disability first. E.g. "that downs baby" or "that downie".....People with down
syndrome are PEOPLE FIRST and need to be called by their name or with
reference to a person with Down syndrome
There is no s at the end of Down. Recent practise is not to capitalize the s in
syndrome. Developmentally delayed, Intellectually disabled/challenged and
Learning disability are terms also used and accepted.
Refering to a person as being retarded or a mongol is NOT acceptable. "WE
OFTEN DONT TAKE SERIOUSLY THE POWER OF THE TONGUE TO
ASSAULT AND ITS ABILITY TO DEVASTATE"
Babies and children with Down syndrome are generally healthy, however
some babies are born with congential heart defects which can be detected at
birth and surgically corrected.
Due to the advanced medical care, the majority of people with Down
syndrome have a life expectancy of approximately fifty-five years. Women
over the age of 35 are at higher risk of having a child with Down syndrome.
Nevertheless more than 80% of children with Down sydrome are currently
being born to mothers under the age of 35.

"IF IN DOUBT.....SHOUT!" We would be glad to assist with any further
information or questions that you may have. Please help us in our quest to
improve the quality of lives of people with Down syndrome.