
SOCIAL MEDIA STATEMENT

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THE CDC HAS NOTED SOCIAL MEDIA CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE PASSING OF MS. VUYOKAZI MADIKANE (AKA VUYOKAZI)

Port Elizabeth, 25 June 2020 – The Coega Development Corporation (CDC) wishes to express its heartfelt condolences for the untimely passing of Vuyokazi Madikane (AKA Vuyokazi). The organisation is deeply saddened by the passing of one of its valuable employees on Saturday, 13 June 2020. At the time of her passing, she worked as an Administrator at the Coega Development Foundation, located at the Human Capital Solutions (HCS) building in Zone 4. The CDC has set aside a day in her honour to mourn her passing. Our heart goes out to the Madikane’s family, friends, and fellow employees in this time of sorrow; know that you are in our thoughts and prayers. May her soul rest in peace, as she will be dearly missed.

Due to the greatest respect we have for the memory of Vuyokazi & her family, we felt obliged to address the narrative that has somewhat gone viral on social media since her passing and provide a factual record on the chronological order of events since her return to work up to the point when she was hospitalised. We hasten to add that ordinarily the CDC does not, lightly and without consideration, entangle itself in untested social media discussions. Whilst the approach that the CDC has adopted is out of the norm, we are equally mindful of the reality, that we live in unusual times where (regrettably) people tend to draw conclusions without hearing the full story from all of those who are affected by it.

When H.E. President Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster in terms of the Disaster Management Act as a result of an outbreak of Severe Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic; which necessitated a national lockdown on 27 March 2020, the CDC implemented a Health and Safety Protocol to comply with the national lockdown regulations. Those employees who did not have the required tools of trade to work from home were provided. Some of the main elements of the Protocol, as amended due to the Alert Level 3 as per government regulations, entail a safe return to the office for those employees who were fit to do so, without medical underlying conditions, and below the age of 65 years old. Therefore, all employees who were not fit to return to the office, had underlying medical conditions, and above the age of 65 years old and those classified by their Physicians to be at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19 were all required to work from home even under Alert Level 3.

To ensure a safe return to the office under Alert Level 3 on a staggered and rotational basis and to comply with the government regulations, the CDC implemented very strict measures in accordance with the CDC's Health & Safety Protocol. The Protocol further entails sanitisation, fogging and disinfection of all CDC offices as well as a thorough screening of all employees at the main entrances using a non-touch forehead temperature scanner and questionnaire, which contains 14 questions. Only employees who answered NO to all 14 questions and with a temperature < 37.5 0C were allowed access to the CDC offices. Employees who answered YES to one or more of the 14 questions were referred to the CDC's Wellness Centre (Clinic) onsite for consultation with a CDC Physician. In addition, all CDC employees were provided PPE on a daily basis at the main gate before entering the premises. Wearing of PPE is mandatory for all employees and visitors entering the CDC premises. Employees are provided with a minimum of 1 face mask in the morning at CDC main entrances and are required to wear them every day and at all times while in the CDC buildings whilst maintaining physical distancing (in compliance with Alert Level 4 of the government regulations, section 5; which is also effective for Alert Level 3). The Protocol was implemented at all main entrances of CDC buildings by security personnel who have been trained to execute these duties and are supported by SHEQ Specialists. As part of the process, communicated to staff, employees who test positive for corona virus are booked off by their Physician and sent for isolation as per government regulations. The track and trace process is followed including shutting down of impacted offices to allow fogging, sanitisation and disinfection of offices.

According to the company records, Vuyokazi returned to the CDC offices on 25 May 2020. She complied with all the above-mentioned screening processes from 25 May to 3 June 2020. On a daily basis, she passed the screening protocol at the HCS entrance building where she worked. Her temperature reading was always < 37.5; she was therefore granted access to the HCS building.

Upon Vuyokazi's return to the office, she was required to attend the CDC's routine Periodical Medical Assessment at the onsite CDC Wellness Centre, a process that is managed by Human Resources (HR) for all CDC employees. The CDC requires that employees visit the onsite Wellness Centre to determine fitness to work as required by OHS legislation. Vuyokazi was contacted by HR on Thursday, the 28th of May 2020 in the morning to schedule her for the Periodic Medical Assessment with the CDC Wellness Centre on Friday, 29th of May 2020 or on a Monday, 01 June 2020. She ended up agreeing for an appointment on Tuesday, 02 June 2020 at 09h00 in the morning.

However, prior to the scheduled consultation with the CDC's Physician on 02 June 2020, she had called the Unit Head of HR at the CDC to inform her about the following:

- On 28 May 2020, in the morning, she advised that she has underlying medical conditions for which she has obtained a letter ("*the letter*") from her private Physician, as required by the organisation to ensure she was fit to return to work, therefore she wanted to send it to HR as per the instructions/communication of the organisation a week earlier;
- She expressed frustration and irritation in that "*the letter*" was not explicit about what her medical conditions were, and also the fact that "*the letter*" from her private Physician was citing or declaring her "a high risk" should she contract the corona virus;
- She mentioned that she had requested her private Physician to state her underlying medical conditions openly, as she did not have a problem with HR knowing what her underlying medical condition(s) was;
- She went on to mention that her underlying medical conditions did not present her with any problems;
- When asked about her frustration with the Physician's medical report ("*the letter*"), she indicated that she was frustrated because she felt fine and well, and wants to come to work and be visible, and the medical report ("*the letter*") from her private Physician may hinder her from coming and being visible at work even though willing, prepared and healthy;

- She asked about what can she do because she is fine and well, and wants to come to work;
- She was advised that the CDC has a responsibility to ensure that it complies with the COVID-19 government regulations, and if she wants to be at work, the CDC has to ensure her safe return to the office by taking all reasonable steps to ensure she was fit for work;
- She was further advised that to assist and facilitate her safe return to work, she will need to be referred to the CDC Wellness Centre for a COVID-19 fitness to return to work risk assessment;
- She indicated that she had already been contacted and booked by HR Coordinator, for a Periodic Medical Assessment on 02 June 2020, for chronic monitoring;
- She indicated that she will nevertheless send HR *“the letter”* from her private Physician; and
- The letter was sent by Vuyokazi to HR at 10h03, acknowledged the same day at 12h24, and at 12h56 indicating that she will inform her private Physician.

On Tuesday, 02 June 2020 (the day of the 1st consultation), Vuyokazi was seen by the CDC Occupational Health Nurse at the Wellness Centre. She arrived at the CDC Wellness Centre for her scheduled appointment to undergo her periodic medical surveillance to determine fitness to work at 9:05am on Tuesday, 02 June 2020, regrettably she arrived at the CDC Wellness Centre without wearing her mask, which is mandatory in terms of the CDC Protocol in compliance with government regulations, as a result she was advised to please go away and wear a prescribed face mask that had been given to her at the main entrance when she arrived for work. She then proceeded to her office to wear the mask and came back within 3 minutes of doing so, she was then attended to immediately when she returned to undergo her medical surveillance examinations.

Regrettably, according to the CDC’s Wellness Centre, Vuyokazi’s medicals could not be completed on Tuesday, 02 June 2020 because she had indicated she forgot her prescribed visual aid (spectacles) at home and was unable to do the vision screening (as part of the periodical medicals process), and she advised the Occupational Health Nurse that she will bring her spectacles the following morning Wednesday, 03 June 2020 to proceed with her vision screening examination, which forms part of the medical surveillance.

Vuyokazi returned to the CDC Wellness Centre the following morning of the 3rd of June 2020 at 8:25 am where she was attended to for her vision screening examination. Vuyokazi was examined by an onsite CDC Physician, in person. It was during the consultation with the CDC Physician where she was referred to hospital for consultation as an emergency. Informed written consent from her was obtained by the Physician as per the Protocol to communicate her medical information to her employer, the Coega Development Corporation. The CDC's Physician indeed sent an email to the Unit Head of HR and that of SHEQ advising them that he was referring Vuyokazi to hospital for admission as he has picked up some complications during her examination. He also indicated that some of the symptoms he picked up were typical for COVID-19, and he will refer her for a COVID-19 test. The CDC's Physician's email to HR and SHEQ was in accordance with the agreed CDC Protocols for case management during the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, an ambulance was called at 09:58am by the CDC Wellness Centre and collected her to Greenacres hospital on 03 June 2020 around 10h30.

Subsequent to Vuyokazi's arrival at the hospital on 3 June 2020, a CDC HR WhatsApp group received a message at 17h08 from another HR colleague (Mr D) informing the team that Vuyokazi was rushed to Greenacres Hospital, and she has tested positive for COVID-19. Mr D further stated that he figured it would be prudent to share it with everybody as he shared the same public transport with Vuyokazi and about 14 other CDC employees. He sought advice on how to proceed. The HR colleagues on WhatsApp group expressed shock, and offered sympathy. Upon becoming aware of the WhatsApp group discussions a few minutes later, the CDC's Unit Head of HR advised the HR WhatsApp group that the facts about Vuyokazi are required and they should respect her confidentiality and privacy. Thereafter, a few minutes later, the CDC's Unit Head of HR contacted Vuyokazi to confirm the information, which she confirmed. In the discussion between Vuyokazi and the CDC's Unit Head of HR, she highlighted the following:

- That a few minutes prior to her call she informed the CDC's Unit Head of SHEQ about her testing positive for corona virus;
- She further stated that during the past two weeks before returning to work on 25 May 2020, she had been seriously unwell, with severe flu;
- She visited her private Physician twice because her cough was not subsiding;
- She drank medication called Alcophylex to suppress the cough;
- She had been feeling extremely tired, and had body pains; and

- She had been in contact with someone who had tested COVID-19 positive the week before she returned to work on 25 May 2020.

Earlier that evening on 03 June 2020, the CDC SHEQ Unit Head immediately contacted Vuyokazi after being sent the HR WhatsApp message, and she (Vuyokazi) confirmed telephonically to her that she has tested Covid-19 positive. This discussion took place before Vuyokazi was contacted by CDC Unit Head of HR. Vuyokazi further informed the CDC SHEQ Unit Head that

- She was traveling to and from work with a group of colleagues;
- They all wore face masks in the transport;
- She went on to say that since her return to the office on 25 May 2020, she had maintained physical distancing as required and complied with the CDC Health & Safety Protocol, which include, amongst others, wearing face masks at all times;
- From 01 June 2020, additional CDC colleagues joined the lift club; however it was difficult to always comply with the Alert level 3 regulations and CDC Protocol when it comes to transportation or lift club;
- At times they could not maintain physical distancing in the lift club;
- She further informed the CDC SHEQ Unit Head that a colleague with whom she had been traveling in the lift club has since been booked off-sick from 28 May 2020;
- She was requested by the CDC SHEQ Unit Head to identify as best she could her close contacts (to immediately implement track and trace in line with the CDC Protocol); and
- After doing so, all close contacts mentioned by Vuyokazi were immediately informed to visit the Wellness Centre on 04th June, and this information was sent to them via CDC SMS line in the evening on 03 June 2020 at 21h30.

On the same evening on 03 June 2020, a message was sent to all CDC staff at HCS where Vuyokazi worked notifying them of a confirmed positive case for corona virus, identified as one of their Colleagues, as a result the office will be closed with immediate effect from the evening of 03 June 2020 and employees were asked not to return to the office on the morning of 04 June 2020, Thursday.

On 04 June 2020, all Vuyokazi's 21 identified close contacts were referred to the CDC's Wellness Centre for consultation with the onsite CDC Physician for screening and testing purposes.

From 05-07 June 2020, offices where Vuyokazi worked including the adjacent training centre building were sanitised, fogged and disinfected. Offices resumed work after 72 hours on 08 June 2020.

On the same evening on 03 June 2020, the Unit Head of HR received a voice note via WhatsApp from one of the CDC colleagues. The voice note was apparently in circulation and had been sent by Vuyokazi to the intended recipients. The voice note stated the following:

- That because there was no response to the CDC's Physician email that had been sent to HR earlier that day on 03 June 2020 advising of Vuyokazi's referral to Hospital, she (Vuyokazi) felt compelled to directly inform the people she had been in contact with. Vuyokazi informed the people around 17h08 (*this was about the same time that Vuyokazi also telephonically informed the CDC that she tested positive for corona virus at 17h30 through Unit Head of SHEQ and later at 18h00 informed Unit Head of HR. Even the CDC Physician had not been informed by the Hospital of her status since referring her for admission and to test for corona virus, earlier that day*);
- She knew how devious the CDC or HR was, and that her close contacts were not going to be informed; and
- CDC or HR was going to hide this information from them.

On Thursday, 4 June 2020 at 10:09am the certificate of fitness indicating the outcome of Vuyokazi's medical surveillance examination was forwarded to CDC HR and it was confirming in writing that Vuyokazi was temporary unfit for duty and had been referred to a Specialist for consultation at the Greenacres hospital.

The following day, Friday 05 June 2020, the CDC's Unit Head of HR received a call from the HR Administrator informing her that the officials from the Department of Labour (DoL) were at the CDC for an inspection. The DoL confirmed that they were conducting a reactive inspection due to a complaint lodged with them by a CDC employee. The employee alleged that CDC HR has instructed him/her to conceal the information regarding a confirmed COVID-19 case at the CDC. A summary report of the inspection by the DoL was prepared and circulated on Friday, 05 June 2020 at 16h00. The DoL report on the case has not been received.

On Saturday afternoon, 06 June 2020 at about 15h30, the Unit Head of HR called Vuyokazi to check how she was doing. She sounded worse and was coughing a lot, however she indicated that she had just been visited by a Physiotherapist, and

a Physio make her cough. She further indicated that her temperature was not coming down, and she was still feeling tired and having severe body pains.

The CDC Unit Head of HR contacted Vuyokazi again on Tuesday, 09 June 2020 to check on her, and she indicated that she was not getting better, and she had been put on a ventilator, she was getting tired and suffering breathing difficulties. The CDC Unit Head of HR called her again on Friday, 12 June 2020 but she did not pick up.

On Saturday, 13 June 2020 mid-morning, the CDC Unit Head of HR received a text message from Project Accountant (Ms L) advising that Vuyokazi has passed on, but could not confirm for sure because she was receiving this information from the cousins and there was nothing official that had been sent. Subsequently, a family member confirmed that indeed Vuyokazi had passed on in the morning of Saturday, 13 June 2020.

On Saturday, 13 June 2020 in the evening, WhatsApp messages from a CDC employee was received by CDC Unit Head of HR about messages circulating on Facebook in relation to Vuyokazi's death. Another WhatsApp message was received from a CDC employee, which was circulating on social media alleging that the CDC was responsible for Vuyokazi's death. The social media messages continued for the entire weekend. We hope that the above-mentioned facts provide clarity on how Vuyokazi's case was dealt with by the organisation. It is unfortunate that some have resorted to accuse the CDC of wrong doing without being privy to all the facts. We deeply regret the social media messages at the time we should be mourning Vuyokazi's death which has caused concern to Vuyokazi's family, friends and fellow employees. The CDC always put the safety and interests of its employees first, that is why the organisation has won National Top Employer Awards (International Top Employers Institute) every year, since 2017. The Awards proudly recognise South Africa's most advanced employers, each demonstrating exceptional employee conditions.

Vuyokazi's death should remind us of Maya Angelou's poem - **When Great Trees Fall** - where she recites about death in one of her stanzas -:

"When great souls die, the air around us becomes light, rare, sterile. We breathe, briefly. Our eyes, briefly, see with a hurtful clarity. Our memory, suddenly sharpened, examines, gnaws on kind words unsaid, promised walks never taken..."

It is for this very reason that when we reflect on the life of Vuyokazi, we are reminded of the dedication and love she had for fellow colleagues. That her soul stood for something, that our hurt is not transformed into a pit of fogginess that seeks to mud her memory. Vuyokazi will be dearly missed by the organisation, her friends, and certainly by her family who have suffered a great loss.

May Her Soul Rest In Eternal Peace!

About Coega: The Coega Development Corporation (CDC) is a public entity in terms of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), based in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality with operations throughout South Africa. The corporation is mandated to develop and operate the 9 003 hectare Coega SEZ, gazetted by the Minister, Dr. Rob Davies (Government Gazette No. 40883 on 2 June 2017) in terms of section 39(2) of the SEZ Act No. 16 of 2014 (“SEZ Act”), replacing the Government Gazette No. 21803 of 1 December 2000, made in terms of the Manufacturing Development Act No. 187 of 1993. In terms of the SEZ Act, the Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT) is the CDC’s Executive Authority, with ordinary shares owned by the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The CDC Board is the Accounting Authority and is accountable to the MEC for Finance, Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Honourable Mlungisi Gerald Mvoko. The CDC’s vision is to be the leading catalyst for the championing of socio-economic development; and its mission is to provide a competitive investment location supported by value-added business services that effectively enable socio-economic development. In the 20 years since its establishment in 1999, the Coega SEZ has become one of the leading SEZ’s in Africa, as a gateway to African and world markets, a transshipment hub and Southern Africa’s most successful SEZ. To date, the CDC has delivered on its mandate to provide socio-economic development for the Eastern Cape, by enabling the creation of over 120 990 accumulative jobs since inception, with 45 operational investors, who have invested R11.579 billion in private sector investment and R9.53 billion in foreign direct investment. The CDC has also trained over 100 000 people since inception.

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