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**LAW SOCIETY EXPRESSES GRAVE CONCERN
AT ONGOING ATTACKS ON THE JUDICIARY**

At a meeting yesterday, the Council members of the Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) expressed grave concern at the unrelenting, improper and thoughtless attacks on the Chief Justice, the judiciary and other institutions of justice in recent weeks.

We have a Constitution that ensures the separation of powers as between the Executive, the legislature and the judiciary, and this separation is properly balanced in our democracy. We also have a Judicial Service Commission that appoints judges in a proper and transparent manner.

Attacks on the Chief Justice, the Constitutional Court, other members of the judiciary and institutions of justice undermine the legitimacy of the judiciary, the courts and our democracy. Such attacks cannot be tolerated. Recent statements that the judgments of any court, including the Constitutional Court, and addresses made by the Chief Justice at public functions are a so-called strategy and timed to coincide with the commencement of the case against the President of the ruling party, are ludicrous and disrespectful towards the Chief Justice and the Constitutional Court. Ultimately, the rule of law in our country is diminished by such improper public utterances.

The LSSA guards the independence of the judiciary and the independence of the profession jealously and vigilantly. The LSSA has full confidence in the Chief Justice, the judiciary and the courts of South Africa as being independent and legitimate.

We echo Chief Justice Pius Langa's recent statement that comment on and criticism of the judiciary 'must be informed and thoughtful, not reactionary and alarmist, because that would tend to undermine the rule of law which is so fundamental to the stability of our democracy'. Also, as

the Chief Justice has warned, uninformed, reactionary and alarmist criticism has the potential to weaken confidence in the judiciary, and without public confidence, the judicial system loses its legitimacy and cannot operate effectively.

We believe it is the collective responsibility of the citizens of South African to protect the institution of democracy in particular the judiciary. For its part the LSSA believes in these institutions and their legitimacy.

***ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS
OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA***

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Editor's note:

The Law Society of South Africa brings together its six constituent members – the Cape Law Society, the KwaZulu-Natal Law Society, the Law Society of the Free State, the Law Society of the Northern Provinces, the Black Lawyers Association and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers – in representing South Africa's 18 200 attorneys and 4 700 candidate attorneys.

In Afrikaans items, please refer to the 'Prokureursorde van Suid-Afrika'.