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*PRESS RELEASE:*

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***ELECTIONS 2024: ACTIVATE! Change Drivers, with the support of the UNDP SA, mobilises young people for a Town Hall Gathering with Political Parties to be held on Sunday 5 May 2024 at the University of Johannesburg, Auckland Park Campus.***

In its continued efforts to mobilise the youth vote, youth network ACTIVATE! Change Drivers is challenging traditional political engagement by prioritising inclusivity and representation in several ways. On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2024, at 17h00 it will host a town hall engagement at the University of Johannesburg that will end in a Live Broadcast on The South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) News and Current Affairs programme, Elections 360 with Sakina Kamwendo and Blain Herman between 19h00 and 20h00. The Engagement will comprise of; young people in their full diversity, civil society organisations, unemployed youth, young professionals, students, learners in high school and political parties represented in the National Assembly and newly formed parties and independent candidates contesting in the 2024 election.

A critical component of democracy and ensuring representative political processes globally is civic participation. With young people making up approximately 35 per cent of the population in South Africa, youth engagement and participation in political processes are critical to ensuring the creation of a stable democracy and inclusive policies.

Approximately 500 young people and political party representatives are expected to engage in debates on policies, allowing for direct interaction and dialogue on how political manifestos address issues faced by communities. The youth in the room will also hear first-hand from the parties on their aspirations for the country as it relates to the participation and inclusion of young people.

The upcoming 2024 national elections in South Africa stand as a pivotal moment, resonating as one of the most critical electoral events since the historical transition in 1994. This election also holds special significance as it witnesses the inclusion of independent candidates (and other provisions of the amended Electoral Bill; marking a major milestone in South Africa's political and electoral evolution.

“The town hall will also provide an opportunity for young people to better understand political, and specifically, electoral processes to inform their participation in the upcoming elections. The engagement will

also provide the young people in the room an opportunity to advocate for more young people in their networks and communities to participate in the elections, get involved in political processes beyond the elections, and actively contribute to strengthening democracy in South Africa”, Tebogo Suping, Executive Director for ACTIVATE! Change Drivers.

“Young people make up the majority of eligible voters and typically, the low level of voter participation is attributed to youth apathy towards elections. Yet, studies (including from ACTIVATE!) have shown that there are structural barriers faced by young people since the 1994 elections, and these barriers have become increasingly complex and obstructive with every election”, Suping.

“In addition to low youth civic education and a lack of trust in the political system as youth experience socio-economic hardship, another significant barrier is the lack of engagement and insufficient interaction of political actors or stakeholders with young people on issues of policy, governance and civic matters”, Suping adds.

—ENDS

To support the Town Hall gathering contact

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About ACTIVATE! Change Drivers

*ACTIVATE! Change Drivers is a multisectoral youth development programme with a national network that in the past 12 years, has delivered a leadership development programme to over 4551 young people from across the country, with tools to enable platforms for youth leaders to connect, share ideas and be empowered to become active change drivers in their communities.*

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