

President to enact sign language as 12th official language

President Cyril Ramaphosa will sign into law the South African Sign Language Bill during a ceremony at the Union Buildings, in Pretoria, today, 19 July.



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On 2 May 2023, the National Assembly approved that Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, be amended to include South African Sign Language (SASL) as an official language to promote the rights of persons who are deaf and hard of hearing.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Presidency said the recognition of South African Sign Language (SASL) as the 12th official language is an important step towards the realisation of the rights of persons, who are deaf or hard of hearing.

“South African Sign Language is an indigenous language that constitutes an important element of South African linguistic and cultural heritage. It has its own distinct grammatical structures and lexicon and it is independent of any other language,” the Presidency said.



SA launches bilingual dictionary for deaf community

5 Sep 2022



The new legislation seeks to:

- Advance the cultural acceptance of SASL;
- Ensure the realisation of the rights of persons who are deaf and hard of hearing to equal protection and benefit of the law and human dignity; and
- Promote inclusive and substantive equality and prevent or eliminate unfair discrimination on the grounds of disability, as guaranteed by Section 9 of the Constitution.

With this initiative, South Africa becomes the fourth country on the African continent to recognise sign language as an official language. Other countries are Kenya, Zimbabwe and Uganda.

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