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The Minister of Sport and Recreation South Africa, Mr. Fikile Mbalula hosted a Send-Off- Dinner for the 2011 South African MILO Champions in conjunction with Nestlé South Africa and the South African Schools Football Association in Johannesburg last night, ahead of the team's departure to participate in the MILO African Champions Tournament.

The MILO African Champions Tournament will take place between 9 and 14 April 2012 in Accra, Ghana. Nestlé MILO is sending the 2011 South African Nestlé MILO Champions team, Nkunzimbini Junior Secondary School from the Eastern Cape, to play against five other schools from Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Kenya. The Nkunzimbini team will enjoy five days in Ghana, during which they will be meeting their fellow MILO Champions from the other countries, and enjoy some of the sights and activities in Accra, as they prepare for the ultimate games.

The inaugural MILO African Champions Tournament was launched in 2010 and took place in South Africa. The event amplified the programme's success, by increasing its reach to five African markets in total. During the 2010 event South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Nigeria participated in the

Fikile Mbalula - Sports and Recreation Minister tournament.

Through its partnership with the Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa, Nestlé is contributing to the increased access and opportunities to sport in South Africa through the provision of equipment and facilities in schools and sport clubs and by providing essential skills development. Nestlé's contribution to schools' sport in South Africa will go a long way in the nurturing of future sportsmen and women.

"We are looking forward to a successful year in 2012 when we roll out the School Sport program. South Africa will never be the same again! In 10 to 20 years time this program must put us in the same league as Australia, the UK and the US," says Minister of Sport and Recreation South Africa, Honourable Fikile Mbalula.

Nestlé MILO has enjoyed a successful partnership with the South African Schools Football Association (SASFA) since 2008, as sponsors of the U/13 age group football tournament held across the nine provinces in South Africa each year. Nestlé uses the tournament as a platform to educate young school going children about the benefits of healthy living through the programme of the football tournament. So far, the number of schools participating has increased from 4 600 in 2008 to over 6 000 in 2011.

"Through government support, Nestlé also aims to achieve the same success of its football platform in the Netball space to utilise this partnership to create one Nestlé Champions programme which affords both genders the opportunity to excel in sport," says Nestlé South Africa's spokesperson, Ravi Pillay.

SASFA President, Mr Mandla "Shoes" Mazibuko wished the team well ahead of their trip to Ghana: "On behalf of the champions of youth development, SA Schools Football Association, we bid a special farewell to our candidate team NKUNZIMBINI JSS from the rural Ngqeleni in the Eastern Cape in the journey to make friends, strengthen relations in the continent through the vision espoused by our partner and sponsor MILO."