

**SWORN STATEMENT MADE BY NOLUBABALO NOBANDLA TO ADVOCATE
NTSIKELELO JOSEPH SANDI re: HER CASE IN THE CRIMINAL COURT OF
BANGKOK IN THAILAND SCHEDULED FOR HEARING ON 11 JUNE 2012**

I the undersigned,

NOLUBABALO NOBANDLA,

do hereby state under oath that,

1. I am a 23 year old female and a citizen of the Republic of South Africa currently being held at Klong Prem Central Prison in Bangkok.
2. I am charged with bringing 600 grams of cocaine in Thailand.
3. I have already pleaded guilty to the charge and explained how I landed in Thailand with 600 grams of cocaine. I did not even know the weight and the type of drugs I was carrying into Thailand. Initially it was said that the weight was 1,500 grams which I did not challenge because I had no idea of what I was carrying. All I knew was that I was forced to take drugs to John, a Nigerian gentleman, and Sulezo a South African woman who had persuaded me to go to Brazil under the pretext that I was accompanying her to get a job from Tony, also a Nigerian.
4. The only reason why I have pleaded guilty is because I cannot deny that I brought the drugs to Thailand. However, the court must understand how it happened and when sentencing me, to show mercy and understanding.
5. I am not a drug trafficker but a victim of the human trafficking business that is conducted in South Africa by foreigners who come to the country under the pretext that they are running from persecution in their countries. Others claim that they have come to establish businesses and employ the local population.
6. In my last appearance the Honorable Judge questioned me about my story. I am however not certain if the court fully understood and appreciated my story and I now give a detailed sequence of events which landed me in this country on 13 December 2011. My State-appointed attorney Ms Woranuch

Sittivicharpinyo can hardly say a word of English and I cannot speak Thai. She consulted with me through an interpreter and I am concerned that she may not have fully understood my story so that she can effectively represent me. The affidavits that are before court were prepared for me by Advocate Sandi from South Africa and got them translated into Thai.

7. I consent that the authorities in South Africa may use my statement to investigating the activities of human traffickers in that country. These are acts whereby the targeted women are promised with jobs overseas, but only to find themselves trapped in a spider web of drug traffickers in foreign countries.
8. This is how I was deceived and induced to travel to Brazil where I was forced to carry drugs to Thailand. Round about November in 2011, I was approached by my friend, Sulezo Rwanqa, from my home town, Grahamstown, South Africa. She said she had a Nigerian friend in Port Elizabeth whose name was Samuel Uchengu. I did not know Samuel personally and all I knew was that he was once married with a lady from Grahamstown. His nickname is "Tuko". He has a shop in Central where he operates from his house at Upper Hill Street with a writing on the wall, "New Age".
9. Sulezo told me that Samuel had a brother in Brazil whose name is Tony Achengu. Tony was running a business in Brazil of selling hair chemicals. Sulezo said she had been given a job by Tony to sell hair chemicals for him. Sulezo was reluctant to go to Brazil alone as she had never been to that country before. She also did not know Tony personally. I very much trusted Sulezo as we grew up together and she was very well-known to my family.
10. Sulezo wanted me to accompany her to Brazil to fetch the hair chemicals which she was going to be selling for him in South Africa. In excitement, I agreed. At the time I had just started a business of catering through help from my aunt and her husband, who are both business people. I also saw a business opportunity for me and Sulezo said that was precisely the reason she had approached me. She had previously assisted me in my catering business. I was also excited about going overseas.
11. Later in November 2011 we went to see Samuel who confirmed what Sulezo had told me. He said we should not worry about travelling expenses. He was

going to buy us the tickets and give us pocket money for the trip. Tony was going to pay the money back to him. He bought the flight tickets at a travel agent in Greenacres, Port Elizabeth. I do not know or remember the name of the travel agent.

12. But on his return Samuel said he had not been able to book us seats in the same Flight because it was full and the next flight only had one seat available. He had been forced to separate us by booking Sulezo in an earlier flight which was leaving on a day before mine, and me in a different flight. We were to fly from Cape Town International Airport to Argentina and from there to Brazil. Samuel said I should not worry because Sulezo and Tony were going to fetch me at the airport in Brazil.
13. Although I was not happy with this arrangement I still agreed to go as I did not suspect anything. Samuel said the flights had already been booked and could not be changed. He would lose all his money if he went back to the travelling agent to cancel the tickets. So Sulezo then left first.
14. Sulezo and one gentleman came to fetch me. Tony had already phoned the hotel where I was going to be accommodated whilst in Brazil. The name of the hotel is Topiza in the city of Sao Paulo.
15. The following day Sulezo told me that Tony had said there was a certain lady who was going to meet us at the bus stop. She did not tell me her surname except that she was a South African. When we met the lady she confirmed being South African. She was much older than Sulezo and me. Her name was Hilda. She said she was employed by Tony and her duty was to receive people who had come to work for Tony. It was her task to take such people to a place owned by Tony where they would be trained. But she first wanted to know if we knew what we were coming to do in Brazil. Sulezo said yes we did. Hilda said she was upset that she had not been told that we were very young people, because the work we were coming to do was very hard and dangerous.
16. I asked Hilda what she meant by dangerous. She said it was about selling and delivering drugs for the Nigerians. I was very shocked and afraid for my life. I realized that I had been lured into a trap. I looked at Sulezo who did not utter a word. Hilda said she had been doing the job for many years. She said she was once convicted in Brazil and was sentenced to four years'

imprisonment for smuggling drugs for the Nigerians. When she was released on parole she went back to South Africa but came back to Brazil as she could not get work there. She also knew Samuel and said Samuel was recruiting South African women for Tony and other Nigerians based in Brazil selling drugs.

17. I told Hilda that I was not prepared to be a drugs smuggler. I then told her what Sulezo had told me. She said it was too late for me to say that. If the Nigerians got to know that I was not going to do the work, they could even kill me or eliminate me in one or the other. No person would know anything about what happened to me. She advised me not to escape but to pretend that I was willing to do the work. According to Hilda, the Nigerians were very brutal people who could do anything for money. I took her advice to pretend I was willing to deliver the drugs.
18. Hilda said some women had tried to escape but were found out by the Nigerians. Nobody knows what happened to those women. She said the Nigerians could even attack my family in South Africa if they thought I was a threat to their activities. She also said the Nigerians who were selling drugs were very well-connected world-wide, including South Africa. They had a lot of money to bribe the police and even politicians. She said nothing would happen to them if I got killed. Even the owner of the hotel where we stayed was possibly a friend of the Nigerians and I could not go and report to him to call the police. She also said the Nigerians had friends in many international airports and would know if I reported at the airport that I was being forced to deliver drugs. When sent on a mission some one would follow me without me knowing.
19. Initially, I thought Sulezo, just like me had been misled by Samuel and Tony, but when she did not look shocked at all by what we were being told by Hilda, I was concerned. From that moment onward I was too afraid of Sulezo and felt that she had misled me. I never told Sulezo that I was not willing to work for the Nigerians.
20. Hilda took us to a certain house where we met two gentlemen and two ladies, all being Nigerians. I do not remember their names. The “training” then started. We were to swallow the drugs wrapped up in condoms so that when we got to the point where we had to deliver the drugs, we could just

eject them from our bodies at the toilet. I cried and said I could not swallow the staff. I was vomiting but I was forced to try. I was repeatedly told that this was the job I had come to do. I was screaming very hard in the hope that the Nigerians would release me and let me go back home. I was also cursing myself for having been so stupid.

21. They then suggested that the drugs were going to be wrapped up around my hair. To this I agreed, seeing it as away out of Brazil. They told me that no person would take any notice of my hairstyle. The two Nigerian ladies then wrapped up the drugs around my hair. This took several hours. The weight around my head was so heavy that my head was painful. I was so dizzy that I could not walk around at and had to sleep. I was told not to worry. I would soon get used to the load on my head. I took about 8 pain killers to relieve myself from the pains. I was tired and exhausted. When I got up I was still feeling dizzy.
22. When I got up I was told that I was going to be taken to the airport and be flown to a place to deliver the drugs. No name was mentioned of the place where I was going to deliver the drugs. So I thought I was going to deliver the drugs within Brazil. At the airport I learnt from the ticket that I was actually being sent to Thailand. There I was going to meet Sulezo and one John whose cellular mobile phone number was given to me by Tony.
23. Sulezo had left Brazil about a day or two before I left for Thailand. I was not told where she was going. I was only told that she had gone to Thailand at the Brazil Airport when I was just about to check in and fly to Thailand. The Nigerians also told me that Sulezo was not like me because she was “bold and strong”. She had taken 15 kg of drugs to someone in Thailand. I was going to be paid R 16,000.00 for delivering the drugs on my dreadlocks.
24. When I came to the airport in Thailand, it seemed that the immigration officers already knew that I was coming, because they went straight for me and took me to a separate room. There the television cameras had already been set up. I told the police that I was coming to Sulezo and John. They phoned the two but their cellular phones were off. I told the police to let me go but follow me until I meet Sulezo and John, they refused. I said I would keep on phoning the two until they answered. They still refused.

25. Obviously, I made an error of judgment in this matter for which I am now forced to pay a heavy price. In retrospect, I should have been more cautious in my dealings with Sulezo and Samuel. I deeply regret the hurt this incident has caused to my family, my mother in particular. Already, I am receiving reports that since I was arrested her health has worsened and she is now receiving medical treatment for acute stress. In fact, I have already apologized to her and the family at large. I also apologize to our government in South Africa and the nation as a whole. To this court, I express my heartfelt apology that I was not suspicious enough even before I left South Africa. I am not a drug trafficker and I do not even know how drugs look like.
26. By the time I came to Brazil there was no way of turning the clock back and pull myself out of the sophisticated web of deception of which Sulezo was apparently a part. This is confirmed by the fact that although Sulezo was in Thailand, she was never arrested until she left. Since she returned to South Africa, she has not visited my family.
27. Even Hilda was possibly part of the deception. She just wanted to know if I was genuine and if not to report that to the Nigerians. I was sent to Thailand simply to get rid of me and to ensure that I would not go back to South Africa and report Samuel to the police.
28. I humbly request this Honorable Court to consider this background and how I was deceived.

NOLUBABALO NOBANDLA

SIGNED and **SWORN** to at **BANGKOK** in **THAILAND** on this the day of **MAY 2012**, the Deponent having agreed that she knows and understands the contents of this oath which are binding upon her.