



**MINISTRY IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**KEY NOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY MS MAITE NKOANA-MASHABANE,
MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR WOMEN, YOUTH AND
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION IN
PREPARATION FOR THE COUNTRY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE 65TH SESSION
OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW65) HELD 1ST MARCH
2021**

Programme Director, Ms Mmabatho Ramagoshi, Special Adviser

Prof Hlengiwe Mkhize: Deputy Minister in the Presidency: Women, Youth & Persons
with Disabilities

Adv Mikateko Joyce Maluleke: Director-General, DWYPD

MS Anne Githuku-Shongwe: UN Women Multi Country Office Representative

Amb Frances Moloi: Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, DIRCO

The Commission for Gender Equality

Government Officials

The Business Sector

Civil society Organisations

Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocol Observed

I bid you a very good morning.

I take this opportunity to greet you all and to salute you for the work you are doing in
your respective communities to advance the lives of women and girls in our country.

It is that time of the year again when the country must prepare itself for participation in
the annual CSW session. If you recall in 2020, when we were about to celebrate
globally the 25th anniversary of the 4th World Conference for Women and the adoption

of the Beijing Platform for Action, for the very first time in its history the CSW Session could sit in its usual manner. That was when the corona virus pandemic had become a global pandemic and countries went into lockdown measures. Consequently none of us could participate in the CSW except all Missions based in New York.

We are now heading to the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women this year. The pandemic has continued to globally impact on all our lives and activities. In that respect, the CSW65 will take place, but in a hybrid manner. Those based in New York will be able to physically participate while the rest of the member states can participate virtually. This is also a historic first but the pandemic has forced us into the 4th Industrial Revolution.

This says to us that no pandemic is going to hold us back from moving towards our goals for women's emancipation, empowerment and development. Gender equality remains critical towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. We have only but nine years to reach this goal. Therefore we must not allow this pandemic to push us back – it has already impacted the lives of women and girls. It has exposed the fault lines of inequalities and patriarchy that continue to persist. It has exacerbated these inequalities and negative social norms for women and girls, not least of which is growing poverty and joblessness among women, and the continuing scourge of gender based violence and femicide.

The world has nine years to reach Planet 50-50 as part of the SDGs 2030. Therefore the priority theme for CSW65, based on women's leadership in public life including through ending violence against women, remains very critical. This is also a very important issue for us in South Africa as we move towards our Local Government elections later this year.

It remains important for us to reflect on our achievements and challenges in our advancement of gender equality, but also on women's leadership in the political, public and corporate lives. We need to openly reflect on what can be done to deal with the identified obstacles preventing women to serve in political offices, on corporate boards and in executive positions in both the public and private sectors.

Indeed as we move towards our local government elections we must openly debate on the representation of women in our municipalities, as mayors and in senior executive positions.

We must engage at the political party level on what active measures we can put in place to move towards 50-50 in the local government level. This is beyond the numbers game – we want women’s voices to be part of the decision making and leadership at this level.

We want women leaders at this level to make a difference for the ordinary women on the ground through the policy and intervention measures. In this way women’s access to basic services, water, electricity, sanitation can be prioritised.

We want women leaders to promote women’s employment as well as opportunities to entrepreneurship and access 40% of the procurement spend.

We want there to be active efforts to reduce gender based violence and femicide at the community level through efforts to prevent violence at the grass roots.

We also want women leaders at this level to prioritise women with disabilities and young women to access services, opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and tenders. We want our women in informal trade to be prioritised by municipalities, and the only way this can happen if we ensure our women are in these leadership and decision-making positions.

What we must engage on is how do we get more of our women from the rural areas to enter into leadership roles so that their voices are part of the efforts towards women’s empowerment and gender equality.

Very often women occupying leadership positions are faced with many barriers and constraints. The most serious of these remains that of violence against them – be it in political killings; sexual harassment at the workplace; continuous sexism, sexual offences, and verbal offensive language that demeans women.

The entrenched nature of gender discrimination continuously undermines and place restrictions on women to lead. GBV impacts on young women and prevents them from taking up leadership positions. Young women face sexual harassment and are sometimes forced into sexual exchange for promotion. This prevents young women from wanting to enter this level.

Women with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination and indignity, which is exacerbated by the lack of access to reasonable accommodation and access into buildings, transport and services which are necessary for a conducive environment to promote women, and young women with disabilities into leadership.

South Africa has many capable and competent women who can serve in political offices, on corporate boards and in public and private executive positions.

However negative social norms and stereotypes, sometime coupled with negative traditional and cultural practices make women stay away from occupying these leadership spaces. It is for these reasons, deliberate, intentional and decisive actions should be taken by all of us as stakeholders to address the multiple barriers preventing women, especially young women and those with disabilities from entering leadership spaces.

According to the UN SG's report on the priority theme for CSW65, violence obstructs women's access to leadership roles and their ability to participate and influence. In this regard, women's human security becomes central to whole agenda for "*Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life*"

If the scourge of gender based violence is combated, gender inequalities in control over resources and in power and decision-making will cease to exist.

Therefore, the closing of gender leadership gaps and achieving full and equal participation of women in leadership is now more than ever necessary. It will require government to work in partnership with international partners, civil society and the private sector to actively promote a conducive environment for women to take up leadership roles. However it very critical that together we must address the scourge of ongoing discrimination and gender based violence from the household, the workplace, public spaces, and in the corporate world.

I look forward to the discussions during this webinar and the many recommendations that will be put forward not only for us in the country but which we can share with the world during the CSW session.

I Thank You