



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

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**KEY NOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY PROF HLENGIWE MKHIZE, DEPUTY  
MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH  
DISABILITIES TO THE GENDERLINKS' INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY &  
WOMEN, VOICE AND LEADERSHIP SOUTH AFRICA SUMMIT AND AWARDS  
CEREMONY, HELD ON 8 MARCH 2021 AT THE KOPANONG HOTEL AND  
CONFERENCING CENTRE**

His Excellency, Amb Christopher Cooter: Head of Mission, Global Affairs, Embassy of  
Canada in South Africa

Ms Jennifer Cooper, Head of Development, Global Affairs, Embassy of Canada

Ms Colleen Louw-Morna: Gender Links

Ms Kubi Rama, Executive Director: Gender Links

Ms Tinashe Chipwanyanya, WVL SA Grants Manager

Development Partners: Embassy of Netherlands, UK AID and Southern Africa Trust

Representatives from the various missions in South Africa

Representative from the Commission for Gender Equality

Representatives from the Civil Society Organisations

Representatives from various government departments

All Protocol Observed

I greet you all on this auspicious International Women's Day. This day that is celebrated globally came about through women campaigning for change in the early 1900's. Since then we have come a long way in many aspects, but in many ways we are still fighting the same fight. It is a day for celebrating women's achievements and successes and a day to remember those women who dedicated their lives to the fight for political-cultural-socio-economic emancipation of women. In saying this, we must

remember and honour Clara Zetkin, a woman from Germany who first tabled the idea of International Women's Day in 1910.

Programme Director,

I thank you for extending the honour to me to deliver a key-note address at this Awards Ceremony which has been organised to recognise and acknowledge women who have dedicated their lives to transforming the lives of other women.

As women did back in the 1900s, they are continuing to raise their voices against oppression and inequalities which persists to date. Women continue to be subjected to negative social norms and practices across the world. The system of patriarchy – for that is what it is – a system – has persisted over the decades and continues to keep women subjugated to different forms of male oppression and behaviours.

In 2020, the world marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference for Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by world leaders. The UN Secretary General noted in his Report on the review of Beijing +25 that whilst progress has been made across the globe in many areas on women's empowerment and gender equality, there are still many challenges that remain. He stated that no country in the world has achieved gender equality as yet, and that we need to accelerate efforts towards the goals of women's empowerment and gender equality.

In 2015, world leaders also adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and 17 SDGs. SGD 5 speaks to empowerment and equality for all women and girls. By 2030, it is expected that the world should meet the targets set out in Agenda 2030. One of which is Planet 50-50 by 2030! That means that we have under nine years to reach gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women.

Following the Beijing +25 review, and in light of the Agenda 2030 looming deadline, UN Women called for a global campaign called Generation Equality that will be implemented through 6 overarching Action Coalitions over the next five years. We must ensure that we leverage this Generation Equality Campaign and the Action

Coalition interventions to mobilise for the fast-tracking of the realisation of the rights, empowerment and advancement of women for an equal future with men.

The 6 Action Coalitions are (i) Addressing Gender-Based Violence; (ii) Economic justice and rights for women and girls; (iii) Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); (iv) Feminist action for climate justice; (v) Technology and innovation for Gender Equality; and (vi) Feminist movements and leadership.

Programme Director, this Awards ceremony today highlights the leadership roles of women in the different sectors. Women are rising up to lead and influence the various agendas on critical issues directly affecting and impacting the lives of women and girls in the country. It is exciting to see the emergence of women's leadership in the categories such as Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender-Based Violence, Youth Development, Economic Justice, Climate Change, Governance, and Covid-19.

Women's full and equal participation in leadership and decision-making positions is essential for achieving gender equality and driving sustainable development. We acknowledge that women continue to remain on the periphery of public life and decision-making; the mainstream economy and in ownership, management and control broadly. This is reflected in the low numbers of women in elected positions and appointed bodies. It is also seen when women remain low skilled and in low paying jobs; or all-male boards in the corporate world. This is compounded by gender based violence women experience on a daily basis – which becomes a barrier to their taking up leadership roles.

The upcoming 65<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women from 15-26 March 2021 will focus on “Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”. This programme that GenderLinks is implementing with women's organisations and in partnership with development partners are such programmes that must be in the Action Coalitions of the Generation Equality Campaign that will be rolled out in the country.

South Africa, under the stewardship of His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa is one of the leaders of the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights, together with Mexico and Spain. However we will also be a partner in Action Coalition on GBV that is led by Kenya as one of the lead countries.

Programme Director,

Allow me to underscore that this event represents the kind of partnership we need to achieve gender equality. That is what Generation Equality is all about. Partnerships between government, civil society, development partners, international organisations and business are very critical for the realisation of gender equality and the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Working together we can do so much more!

Within the context of “**leaving no one behind**” and hashtag “**whatwomenwant**”, we must use the Generation Equality Campaign to build strong multi-stakeholder partnerships inclusive of government, civil society, private sector, entrepreneurs, trade unions, artists, academia, gender activists and social influencers to chart a path forward for a bold feminist agenda.

We must use the opportunities emerging with the recently launched African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement to mainstream women’s economic issues in its implementation. We need to create multilateral, multi-stakeholder, and intergenerational partnerships to leverage the opportunities that avail themselves for women owned and led businesses and women entrepreneurs. Women’s leadership and participation must imbue the implementation strategy for the AfCFTA in South Africa.

Added to this is making the African Decade on Women’s Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment 2020-2030, championed by President Ramaphosa as the former Chair of the AU, work for the development, advancement and economic empowerment of women, young women; women with disabilities, informal women traders, including cross border traders, women in rural areas and those in agriculture,

women owned and led businesses, especially SMMEs and Cooperatives, among others.

It is only through working in partnerships and in ensuring women's voices are heard and women's participation promoted that we can achieve tangible results on gender equality during the 2020-2030 United Nations Decade of Action. We must also bring together a multi-generational mix of old and new generations of women, girls, men and boys to work together to accelerate gender equality and agree on a common approach.

Let us remember that the adolescent 15 year old girl is the core focus of Generation Equality. **Because in 2030, she will be 25 years old** – a young women for whom the world should be fairer, equitable, non-discriminatory and one in which she is empowered and emancipated. She is a leader in her own right and can take active part in making decisions – a life in which she is safe and can exercise her choice!

Programme Director,

I take this opportunity to salute all those who will be receiving the awards today. I wish you strength and courage to press on. The road that we are travelling is not smooth but very bumpy because of the challenges we are confronted with as women. The struggle continues....

I thank you