



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

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**ADDRESS DELIVERED BY MS MAITE NKOANA-MASHABANE, MINISTER IN THE  
PRESIDENCY FOR WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO  
THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WEBINAR ON "WOMEN'S ECONOMIC  
AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN THIS DECADE: ACCESSING OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR WOMEN THROUGH THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA  
(AfCFTA) AGREEMENT ON 08 MARCH 2021**

Programme Director: Adv Mikateko Joyce Maluleke, Director-General, DWYPD

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

Ms Nadira Bayat: Gender and Trade Expert, UN Economic Commission for Africa

Ms Prisca Soko: Chairperson of the SADC Women in Business

Ms Judi Nwokedi, Black Business Council

Ms Valerie Geen, UNIDO National Coordinator for Economic Empowerment of  
Women in Green Industries

Representative from the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition

Government Officials

The Business Sector

Women's Organisations

Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocol Observed

I wish you all a happy International Women's Day. This day is marked globally to  
recognise the struggles of women all over the world, and to take note of the  
achievements we have made in empowering women and girls.

Women's struggles globally spans well over centuries. Women have fought for their right to vote and be elected into leadership. However, this franchise that women earned for themselves has not totally changed the lives of women and girls.

We are still faced by the oldest ideology of patriarchy which continues to negatively impact our efforts towards equality and emancipation. There is continuing negative social norms which need to be transformed so that it is no longer a barrier to women's empowerment.

Women, especially young women, need to still break glass ceilings in many spaces to advance their participation and leadership roles. Women still experience gender based violence in the homes, at work and in society in general.

Women are still not fully included into employment and opportunities in the economy. They continue to be marginalised from mainstream opportunities, from ownership, management and control broadly, from owning land and property, from decision-making, and from access to financial opportunities.

It is therefore critical that we use the momentum created by the thematic focus of the upcoming CSW 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".

We must ensure that in all that we do we must strive to promote women, especially young women, and those with disabilities, into participation in various leadership and decision-making roles.

At this point in time, the African Continent is focusing on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement. We must continue as the women across the continent to ensure that women are not left on the margins of this agreement. Women need to make sure that their voices are heard and that they are an integral part of the implementation of the Agreement.

Women's financial inclusion and economic empowerment must be mainstreamed across the implementation strategies of the AfCFTA.

Programme Director – DG

We have been engaging over the past weeks with different stakeholders in the country in conceptualising what AfCFTA means for women. What I want us to do going forward as a Department, DG, is to take concrete actions.

- We must continue to create more of these dialogues with women in general; the business sector, business women, women informal traders; women cooperatives; women SMMEs; women farmers and women in agriculture; Disability Rights organisations and youth organisations
- We must have engagements with different government departments mainly the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition on ensuring that as they develop the National Strategy for Implementation of AfCFTA, the DWYPD, and women are an integral part of this process. **We must mainstream now into the main plan. We cannot be an “add-on” later.**
- The DWYPD must further the work with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) so that they provide the country with the technical assistance to mainstream gender into the AfCFTA implementation plan
- We must engage financial institutions on how barriers to women's access to loans and credit can be eased so that women are able to take up opportunities emerging from AfCFTA
- DG, let us set up meetings with the different departments to identify what are the opportunities in each sector that women can take up – including value chain opportunities; intra-regional trade opportunities; and women's access to land.
- We need to work with Home Affairs and DTIC on addressing barriers that women informal cross border traders are experiencing – and to simplify some

of the processes and red-tape. We must use the NSP on GBVF to address the GBV that women informal traders are experiencing mainly at the border posts.

- Let us make sure DG that we engage with the Infrastructure programme; the manufacturing programme, including the automotive industry programme and the recent Ford Motor Company investment. I want to see clear plans on women are part of these master plans.

Programme Director

The time for rhetoric talk is over. I want us to act now so that our women are able to genuinely benefit from the opportunities of the AfCFTA.

Yesterday I heard that Mpumalanga was launching a fresh produce market as an effort to assist small scale producers and emerging farmers in the province to overcome the impact of COVID pandemic on their income generation. They are engaging in trade across the border with Mozambique and internally with markets. We need to engage with this initiative in Mpumalanga to determine how women are benefitting from these opportunities. It is very exciting indeed.

I see the possibilities of wonderful opportunities for women. For me Programme Director, this makes the AU Decade for Women's Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment 2020-2030 become a reality.

If we harness the possibilities and the opportunities, we will be able to meet many of our Agenda 2030 goals on Sustainable Development and make planet 50-50 a reality.

We can even be able to say "Gender Equality in my lifetime!".

I thank you