



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 ON
LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN**

Your Excellency, Ms Astrid Emilie Hellen, Ambassador of
Norway

Your Excellency, Ms Vericcoh K Nghiwete, High Commissioner
of Namibia

Your Excellency, Mme Benita Diop, African Union Special
Envoy on Women, Peace and Security

Your Excellency, Ms Nardos Bekele-Thomas, UN Resident
Coordinator in South Africa

Ms Tamara Mathebula, Chairperson of the Commission for
Gender Equality

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening.

Today we celebrate a milestone in the agenda of women's
empowerment and gender equality, the National Action Plan on
Women Peace and Security.

We are launching it during the CSW65 which has a timely priority theme 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.

The theme for CSW65 is urging us all to ensure the full participation and decision making also in the military to ensure that there is no space that is not occupied by women.

This launch is taking place in very difficult times after the devastation caused by COVID-19 globally and has deepened pre-existing gender inequalities and has disproportionately affected women and girls.

Women are losing livelihoods because they are overrepresented in sectors and jobs hardest hit by COVID-19.

A recent report by UN Women shows that women's mental health has suffered a larger setback: 57% of women noting increases in stress and anxiety, compared to 48% of men. Increased unpaid care and domestic workloads, anxiety over income loss, and the impacts of movement restrictions on gender-based violence, are all contributing factors

Further, as we are all aware, women are also among those worst affected by the economic fallout of the current crisis. Because, women are more likely than men to own micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises and vulnerable businesses in the informal sector.

In short, COVID-19 has forced a reckoning with global inequalities, fragilities and entrenched gender discrimination. Therefore, in all recovery plans, women must be at the centre and in leadership position to correct these inequalities.

Despite these challenges, women from all walks of life have been at the frontlines in the response to COVID-19. They have played an enormous role in efforts to flatten the curve of infection and position their nations for economic recovery.

It is reported that seventy per cent of frontline health and care workers are women, and have worked tirelessly day and night in saving lives in very difficult conditions globally and even sacrificed their lives to save humanity. We are grateful for their commitments and may their souls rest in eternal peace.

It is also reported that women peace-builders have also played a vital role in public health messaging in low trust and conflict-affected communities.

We have also seen women, leading in providing food parcels and ensuring that people do not die of hunger.

Further, we have also seen women in the forefront of providing services for victims of gender based violence, including shelters during hard lockdowns and in conflict situation.

Therefore, as we talk of planning backward better, women must be in the forefront.

There is ample evidence that when women are in power, their modes of governance support the well-being of entire populations, in line with the values of fairness, equality, peace and human rights. Women who own businesses are women who originate, who lead, who adapt, who create.

They bring this spirit to their families and communities, often going well beyond societal expectations of the roles women should play. And they will help guide us all out of crisis and into a better future.

The example we have of women leadership and excellence in dealing with this pandemic has been reported widely that countries led by women, actually managed COVID-19 better than their male counterparts.

In conclusion, I am confident that this launch today will mark an important way-forward in our collective efforts to recognise the

important contribution and role of women in promoting peace and security.

I thank you.