



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

KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR
WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, HONOURABLE SINDISIWE
CHIKUNGA, MP AT THE ACCASSION OF A DIALOGUE WITH PRIVATE SECTOR AND
BUSINESS WOMEN
UPINGTON, NOTHERN CAPE
17H00 – 20H00

- Programme Director;
- Premier of the Northern Cape: Honourable Dr Zamani Saul;
- Members of National Parliament and Provincial Legislatures in our midst;
- Political and Traditional Leadership;
- Captains of different Industries;
- Business leaders;
- Entrepreneurs;
- Members of the media;
- esteemed Ladies and gentlemen;
- MALIBONGWE!

INTRODUCTION

Allow me to extend cordial greetings to everyone in attendance of this very important **Dialogue with the Private Sector & Businesswomen in the Province of the Northern Cape**. It is indeed a privilege to address you today at this significant dialogue during Women's Month. A dialogue of this nature is a continuous MUST for all women across all sectors. It is a must, because, the progress made on the implementation of economic empowerment programmes for women, the youth and persons with disabilities need to be monitored and consistently reported

on for change to happen. This event, thus, provides a vital platform for discussing the economic empowerment of women and for forging stronger partnerships between the public and private sectors.

I must indicate that by women, we mean young women in the youth, women with disabilities as well as women in general.

Programme Director;

On the 1st of August 2024, when we launched the Women's month, we announced that Theme for this year is: ***“Celebrating 30 Years of Democracy Towards Women's Development.”***

The year 2024 is significant as it marks several milestones in the struggle for the emancipation of women and their pursuit for the right to self-determination and self-actualization in all areas of human development. ***And, today, as part of Women's August Month celebrations, we are here, in the Northern Cape, in conversation with women in the Private and Business Sectors.***

THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MANDATE, PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMMES

Ladies and gentlemen;

As The Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD), we have been at the forefront, championing initiatives designed to entrench and institutionalize women's rights, empowerment, and equality. The world-over, for any nation, to achieve true growth, development and economic progress both women and men must be given equal opportunity to contribute and benefit. Thus, as we mark 30

years of our democracy, our commitment to economic inclusion for women, remain unapologetically steadfast, in line with **Women's Charter for Effective Equality** adopted by the **National Women's Coalition Structures** in 1994, which also marks 30 years since its existence.

Programme Director;

As we collectively celebrate the strides that we have made, we also give due consideration to the tasks that remain undone: **The need to drive (a) inclusive growth and job creation (b) to reduce poverty and to tackle the high cost of living; and the task of (c) building a capable, ethical, and developmental state.** We remain mindful of the fact that in each of these priority areas, women are the most affected.

To achieve our mission to address the plight of women in business, government, farm workers, mining, and the unemployed, is it important that we, firstly, redefine advocacy and mainstreaming to be strategy-programmes-goals-oriented and action-driven. Secondly, we need to advocate and mainstream women across all sectors; with a focused lens on industries with high potential for growth and development.

Thirdly, we need to ring-fence funds in the budget to ensure implementation of women socio-economic empowerment, starting with the allocation of change oriented -budget allocation for the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities which need to reflect intentional implementation of the gender planning and budgeting framework.

Programme Director;

We must applaud the significant efforts by His Excellency, President Ramaphosa, who signed into law the **Public Procurement Bill**, a legislation that will regulate public procurement, including preferential procurement, by all organs of state. Noting, the struggle for economic emancipation of women, this legislative prescript provides our department, with an opportunity to advocate and mainstream tangible models and interventions to redress the longstanding and ongoing socio-economic exclusion of women.

Historically, women in South Africa have been at the receiving end of social, political, economic, and institutional exclusion informed by colonialism, apartheid, and patriarchal norms and values. The pervasiveness of this exclusion has been felt hardest by black working class and poor women. Therefore, ensuring women's full participation in the South African economy is essential, for the ideals of equity, prosperity, as well as shared and inclusive growth to be achieved.

NOTABLE ACHEIVEMENTS IN SUPPORT AND GROWTH OF WOMEN BUSINESSES

Programme Director;

Over the past three decades, there has been a notable surge in the establishment, growth, and support of women-owned businesses in key sectors including energy, tourism, agriculture, ocean economy, and manufacturing. According to the most recent Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs (MIWE), South Africa ranks as the second highest country in Africa in terms of its proportion of women-owned

businesses and the formal support available for women entrepreneurs. In addition, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Women's Entrepreneurship Report reveals that women in countries like South Africa are among the most innovative and high-growth entrepreneurs in the world.

Distinguished Women Captains of Industries;

There is sufficient evidence that reaffirms the importance of women entrepreneurs in contributing to the overall productivity and transformation of our economy through diversifying industries, innovation, and fostering economic resilience. In addition, women-owned businesses contribute to the creation of employment opportunities, promote inclusive supply chains, and stimulate local economies.

The diverse perspectives brought by women entrepreneurs have fostered creativity and adaptability, positively influencing the business ecosystem. Therefore, the formation of the Women's Economic Assembly (WECONA) is very important in ensuring the gains made in advancing women's entrepreneurship are protected, advanced by all social partners, and institutionalized.

Our strategic posture working with the Women's Economic Assembly must continue to elevate the **socio-economic empowerment of women**, through a women's trade expo amongst others. The intention is that women owned businesses must be afforded an opportunity to connect, collaborate and cooperate with each other in relation to trading with each other, and to broadening their opportunities to other markets

and trade opportunities. This intervention targets women in the formal, informal sectors and as new entrance in various sectors of the economy.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTINENT

Distinguished Dignitaries;

His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, as the Chair of the AU in 2020 put forward a number of recommendations for the advancement of women on the continent, which have been adopted by AU Heads of States. One of the important recommendations was the adoption of the Decade for African Women's Financial Inclusion and Gender Equality, 2020-2030.

This is a critical initiative for the women of Africa, given that the lack of access to finances hinders their socio-economic progress, and thwarts their ability to have ownership and control over resources such as land, businesses and property.

Women's access to markets continues to be a challenge for women on the continent, especially access to trade and global markets. The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) thus, open doors for global trade and markets for women, and this is of huge importance to the women in South Africa as we have to leverage on the opportunities this AfCFTA promises for the economic empowerment and wealth creation for women in Africa.

Distinguished Ladies;

Africa must be Africa's biggest trading partner. Demands for products across the continent offers African women especially those in business the opportunity to be suppliers to the demand. Joint initiatives of pooling resources in this regard will help grow women businesses, provide the necessary skills and training required to fully benefit in the open markets and export trade opportunities.

The **Development Finance Institutions** also plays a critical role in ensuring that access is eased and increased to support Manufacturing across the country. Our Trade policy, export promotion, competition and business regulations are all key components to make this work in conjunction with company commitments to localise their value chains. Expanding their global reach in the export market will be hinged on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which should serve as a catalyst to African manufactures who must equally use this platform to develop regional networks for trading. And, women in business, women entrepreneurs, must be radical and participate in such trade developments and opportunities.

In December 2024, South Africa, will be taking over the Presidency of the G20, and will further host a G20 Summit in February, 2025. This Summit promises to be massive, bigger than 2010 World Cup. Heads of States will descend to the South African shores. As South African women, in business and different sectors including the tourism and hospitality sectors; we must start now and engage amongst ourselves. We must discuss the form and shape of empowerment programmes and projects we need as women pre, during and post the G-20 Summit. We

must define what type of partnership and commitment we need to enter into with countries who will be participating at the G-20 Summit. We must make use of our Missions abroad to seek information and tangible public-public, private to private or business-to-business or a mixture of these partnerships and collaborations. And, such engagement are urgent and need to happen now.

ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE (GBVF)

Programme Director;

During His tenure as the Chair, HE President Ramaphosa also placed emphasis on addressing violence against women and girls. He further called for the development and the adoption of an AU Convention on Addressing Violence against women and girls. I am happy to learn that the AU Assembly has adopted the need for the development of a Continental Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls in Africa. It is also very heartening to note that the AU Gender and Women's Directorate has taken up the cudgels in this regard and is currently busy with the legal drafting of this Convention.

I believe that once this Convention is finalised and agreed to by all Member States, as well as adopted by the AU Assembly, it will play a critical role in the continent being able to address and eliminate the scourge of violence against women and girls, including the violations of their human rights. South Africa has no place in any home, public or work space for GBVF. We must both men and women bring awareness, educate, and eliminate it from our societal fibre.

AVAILABLE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES TO LEVERAGE ON IN THE PROVINCE OF THE NORTHERN CAPE

Honourable Premier,

As the department of women, youth and persons with disabilities we look forward to tangible current and future interventions or programmes for economic empowerment of women in this province. As a department we are going full steam at establishing and adopting models which are **cultivating emerging industrialists** through Infant Industries Development, Product Development, Market Access and Expansion to domestic, regional, and global value chains and networking.

The Northern Cape Province also have these strategic sectors which offer opportunities to cultivate industry development and expansion. These are in Technology, Renewable Energy, Agriculture and Agri-business sectors amongst many.

For Example, in Technology, industries such as software development and IT services offer significant opportunities for women. With relatively low barriers to entry and the potential for remote work, these fields can empower women through training programs in coding, software development, and IT women to start online businesses, reaching wider markets with lower overhead costs. Encouraging participation in tech incubators and innovation hubs can lead to the creation of new businesses and innovative solutions that address local and global challenges. The technology sector is rapidly growing and offers flexible working conditions with significant economic impact.

The **Renewable energy sector** also presents substantial opportunities. Some parts of the Northern Cape enjoy, on average, close to 290 days of sunlight, often accompanied by strong winds, which makes this far-flung province in South Africa one of the hotspots for renewable energy projects in Africa. Training women in the installation, maintenance, and management of solar and wind energy systems can create sustainable employment and promote green energy. Providing energy auditing and consulting services to businesses and households empowers women to become leaders in energy conservation.

This sector addresses both economic and environmental goals, making it ideal for inclusive growth. We recently welcomed back to the country 22 Young Women called Solar Mamas who were trained in India on Solar Energy. The Solar Emerging Industrialists Programme will be reconceptualized and rolled-out nationally.

The **Manufacturing and production sector** also holds great promise here in the Northern Cape. The textile and apparel industry can provide numerous employment opportunities for women, especially in small-scale manufacturing units.

Training in design, production, and marketing is essential. Involving women in the manufacturing of automotive parts and components can drive industrial growth and skill development. Supporting small-scale furniture and craft industries can create jobs and promote local culture and craftsmanship. The manufacturing sector has the potential to create numerous jobs and contribute to economic stability, supporting industrialization and local production and across the continent.

In the **Services sector**, Training women in tourism and hospitality management, tour guiding, and event planning can leverage South Africa's rich cultural and natural heritage. We must encourage women to pursue careers in banking, insurance, and financial planning with the end goal to enhance financial inclusion and economic participation. The services sector is crucial for inclusive growth, supporting other sectors of the economy.

Mining: Precious metals dominate the mining activities in the Northern Cape as it accounted for 89% of the mining output in 2021. But mining plays a dominant role in Northern Cape's economy.

So, the question is, how do women participate, or access markets or skills development in these sector/s?

As a country we must ring-fence our own critical minerals, determine our own pricing and not be price takers when we export the actual raw materials.

Despite our successes, significant challenges remain. Many women entrepreneurs still struggle with accessing capital and navigating regulatory landscapes. Balancing business and family responsibilities continues to be a significant hurdle, and societal biases and stereotypes persist, undermining the potential of women.

PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN MAINSTREAMING WOMEN ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION

Programme Director;

Private sector engagement is critical to overcoming these barriers. Businesses have the power to drive change by adopting inclusive

practices and fostering supportive environments. By integrating women into their supply chains and value networks, companies can contribute to social equity while enhancing their own competitiveness and innovation capabilities.

Today's dialogue is a testament to our shared commitment to economic inclusion. The government will continue to support women through policy enhancements and resource allocation, but your role as business leaders is indispensable.

POTENTIAL GAPS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR

We are urging the private sector to include the women in various sectors offered in the Northern Cape Province such as business development/incubation support, market access for those in business, financial and non-financial support. This is an opportunity to create an inclusive economy. This is an opportunity to invest in the province for women. Let us move forward with a shared vision, ensuring that our collaborative efforts translate into real benefits for women. Together, we can build a more inclusive and prosperous future for all South Africans. Taking this opportunity to strengthen our partnerships and drive meaningful change.

Our policy frameworks, such as the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) strategy and the newly enacted Procurement Bill, create a conducive environment for women entrepreneurs. These policies provide among others preferential procurement opportunities and support mechanisms that encourage the growth of enterprises owned by black people, women.

CONCLUSION

As I conclude, in essence South Africa as a country we must not shy away from putting our own interest first when interacting with the global dynamics, as has been every developed state for many years. We must therefore cut the barriers of entry and rid ourselves of collusion elements that drive uncompetitive behaviour from private sector so that we are best placed to open markets that are diverse and inclusive in their construct from the very onset.

The role of incentives should be looked into in more depth, the rise of incubators must become more responsive to women needs in business and across all sectors of the economy and value-chains, so that they close identified gaps as this paramount to achieve a more equitable and inclusive economy that will benefit all.

Thank you for your participation and unwavering commitment to economic inclusion.

Malibongwe!