

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

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR
WOMEN YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
DURING THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON
WOMEN'S DAY – MONTH CELEBRATION**

DATE: 27 AUGUST 2024

TIME: 14:00 – 17:30

VENUE: Goodhope Chambers, Cape Town

**Speaker / House Chairperson
Honourable Members,
Fellow South Africans**

**BACKGROUND: HISTORIC EVOLUTION OF THE
STRUGGLE AGAINST PATRIARCHY AND THE
OPPRESSION OF WOMEN.**

Honourable Members,

This Women's Month is memorable, marking several milestones in the ongoing struggle for the total emancipation of

women from all forms of discrimination, subordination, exploitation, as well as their pursuit for equality in all areas of human development.

70 years since the adoption of the historic Women's Charter in 1954, 68 years since the Historic Women's March in 1956, 30 years since the adoption of the Charter for Effective Equality in 1994. We honour women such as Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, Mama Winnie Madikizela Mandela, Mama Gxowa, Mama Albertina Sisulu and all those women who paved the way for women to enjoy all the **“rights and opportunities that society offers to any one section of the population”**.

From the start government was committed to creating a non-racist, non-sexist not ableist and developmental state built on the Reconstruction and Development priorities.

These included removing restrictions on women's work, increasing paid maternity leave, and protecting women from domestic violence and sexual harassment amongst others.

PROGRESS IN REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

Honourable Chair,

Under the theme for the 2024 Women's month which is **“Celebrating 30 Years of Democracy Towards Women's**

Development,” we recognized how far the women of our country have come, the journeys they have travelled, as well as the victories they have achieved, and the missteps experienced in three decades of our democracy.

Over the past three decades, our journey to transform the gender and racial composition of the judiciary has been nothing short of exemplary. From two white female judges in 1994, today we have 113 women judges which is 45% representation. This includes the ascendancy of Chief Justice designate Mandisa Maya as the first female Chief Justice to occupy the position of Chief Justice and the Head of the Apex Court, the Con-court. Justice Maya is part of a much larger narrative—one that goes beyond mere representation.

In this very house, we have made significant strides in ensuring equal representation in **decision-making and law-making structures**, such that today, women hold 43.5% of the seats in Parliament. Similarly, 42.6% of Executive Members are women.

We have surpassed gender parity in higher education participation rates. We are transforming sectors which were considered for males only. Since 1994, we have made significant strides producing world renowned women as agriculture industrialists, entrepreneurs, aviators, mariners, engineers and artists. We have traversed the spaces of innovation, technology and communication.

A number of Chapter 9 institutions were established including the Commission on Gender Equality. We have also seen the establishment of the Ministry in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.

In Global Government Forum's Women Leaders Index (2022), SA is 3rd of G20 countries by proportion of women in the top five grades of its public service, at 48.6%. 7.2 % improvement was made over 2years and a 14.8% (the fourth largest increase) – over 10 years.

The 2023 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum shows that SA, along with 15 other countries, have closed more than 70% of the overall gender gap. South Africa is ranked at number 20 in the 2023 Global Gender Gap report.

Despite these achievements, we are the first to admit that the majority of women are yet to realise the taste of the freedom for which so many paid the ultimate price. Class, Gender and Race continue to intersect in ways that reproduce untenable socio-economic realities for women of all ages.

INTERVENTIONS:

Honourable Chairperson, with regard to our planned interventions, allow me to highlight just three of many.

A. Ensuring Women have Access to Land for Livelihood Restoration, for Wealth Creation and for Dignity

The historic treatment of women as minors who are incapable of owning property, continues to reproduce itself today through landlessness and its related disadvantages. The transfer of land, wealth and income earning ability to organised women will be prioritised. This is particularly urgent given that, according to Stats SA, **out of 18,5 million households, 7,8 million (42,2%) are headed by women.**

Over the next five years we will champion the transfer of land ownership to women's cooperatives for productive and commercial purposes through policies and catalytic projects.

Through our collaboration with Transnet Properties, we have secured 22 land parcels for this initiative: 5 sites in Vhembe District; 4 sites in Sekhukhune; 8 sites in Amatole; 2 sites in Harry Gwala, 1 site in Umzinyathi; 1 site in OR Tambo; 1 site in Alfred Nzo.

B. Emerging Industrialists Accelerator Programmes - Growth, Job Creation and Poverty Alleviation

Chairperson,

During the opening of Parliament, the President announced massive plans to ramp up a green manufacturing sector over the next five years. We will ensure that women are at the centre and do not remain in the margins of these projects.

To this end, we have conceptualised a series of Emerging Industrialists Accelerator Programs and intend to rally all relevant stakeholders, particularly SOEs and industry associations behind their implementation. Emerging industrialists will receive support **from ideation through to product development, financing, market access, and commercialisation pathways.** To support these initiatives, we are advocating for **the establishment of an Emerging Industrialists Fund.**

C.SANSI: SANDF-led NYS - Skills Development and an Industrious Youth

Honourable Members,

Through the recently launched SANDF-led National Youth Service (NYS) Programme, we aim to rally industry associations, universities, the CSIR, and participating sister departments behind a nationally coordinated and de-siloed catalytic initiative to combat youth unemployment. Work is underway to ensure that the first round of NYS recruits is

enrolled before the end of the financial year. A minimum of 50% of the beneficiaries of this program will be women, including **unemployed graduates** and **those who have completed Grade 12** but are currently sitting at home.

D. With regard to the scourge of **Gender-based Violence and Femicide**, we will base our response on evidence-based research. Some of our actions and programming will be informed by the soon to be released first country-wide GBVF Prevalence Study conducted in partnership with the HSRC.

REFLECTIONS ON THE AVAILABLE LEGISLATIVE INSTRUMENTS IN ADVANCING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Over the past 30 years, we have enacted a number of legislative instruments to advance women's rights and fight Gender Based Violence from the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998, to the National Council on Gender Based Violence and Femicide Act 9 of 2024.

However, experience has demonstrated that the mere presence of laws does not necessarily result in improved living conditions for women and children. The implementation of these laws are the most crucial and the regard of GBVF as a societal matter.

Chairperson,

We are encouraged by all organized groups that have pledged to work with us to fulfil our mandate, from WECONA, SAYEC, the Maxeke Institute, NYDA and many others. After all, even after freedom was attained, women still have to be their own liberators. We stand ready to join hands with every single one of you to fulfil this mission.

In the words of Wangari Maathai:

“You cannot enslave a mind that knows itself, that values itself, that understands itself. Human rights are not things that are put on the table for people to enjoy. These are things you fight for and then you protect. We will not tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations to rise up and walk”.

I thank you.