

SPEECH BY GAUTENG PREMIER DAVID MAKHURA ON THE OCCASION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL'S DIALOGUE WITH WOMEN IN GAUTENG, CONSTITUTION HILL

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Programme Director, Ms Criselda Kananda ;
Members of the Executive Council;
Heads of Departments and DDGs;
Chief Executive Officer of the Constitution Hill, Mr Themba Ntuli;
Leaders of various women's organisations;
Veteran of the Struggle, Mme Cecile Palmer;
Ladies and Gender Activists;

Happy Women's Month! Wathint'abafazi, wa thint'imbokodo!

Three days ago, our country celebrated Women's Day which coincided with the Fifty-Ninth Anniversary of the 1956 Great Women's March. The 9th of August marks an important day in our national calendar, a day on which we honour the contribution of women and reflect on their place in our society.

As a democratic nation, we have declared the entire month of August Women's Month in order to focus our societies attention on the ongoing struggle for women emancipation, gender equality and the overall struggle to build a national democratic society free from all forms of discrimination and want.

We congregate at a sacred site where women freedom fighters, black and white, were incarcerated and tortured for fighting for equality.

Accordingly, we must always start from the beginning by paying tribute to the pioneers and forbears of the struggle for gender equality in our country and the world at large.

We remember the brave women of the Free State who organised the first women's march against pass laws in 1913. Equally, we remember the women who took up the anti-beer campaign in 1918. These were militant women's campaigns which took place many years ahead of the adoption of militant mass campaigns by the liberation movement.

We pay tribute to those women who took part in the drawing up of Women's Charter in April 1954, before the adoption of the Freedom Charter. The 1956 march shook the foundations of apartheid power.

All these historic events illustrate the point that quite often, women have been ahead of their male counterparts in terms of organisational and mobilisational capacity and tactical readiness to move the struggle to the next level.

It is therefore fitting and proper that should always start by paying tribute to brave women pioneers of the calibre of Charlotte Maxeke, Lilian Ngoyi, Marry Moodley, Dorothy Nyembe, Fatima Meer, Francis Baard, Amina Cachalia, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, Sonia Bunting, Florence Mophosho, Ruth First, Adelaide Tambo, Albertina Sisulu, Ruth Mompati, Bertha Gxowa, Ruth Mompati, Aunty Sophie De Bruyn, Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.

This is a special generation of women who have demonstrated the strength, resilience and tenacity of women leadership and paved the way for many subsequent generations of women who occupied the front ranks during the struggle for freedom and post-apartheid years.

We also pay tribute to the first women parliamentarians, members of the legislatures and councillors as the pioneers of public representation.

This month, we also pay tribute to the present and new generation of women leaders and activists who are torch bearers in the struggle for reconstruction, transformation and socio-economic development – women in politics, business, trade unions, academia, media, sports, faith-based organisations and civil society.

We begin the new phase of radical social and economic transformation, with a firm belief that there can be no successful radical transformation, modernization and re-industrialization (TMR) without the full and active participation of women.

Oliver Tambo would have said about liberation: *“Our liberation will not be complete, our mission not accomplished until we achieve the total emancipation of the women of our country.”*

The real measure of progress in this journey for radical social and economic transformation will be the role and position of women in our national democratic society.

Programme Director, our quest to build an equal society draws inspiration from, among others, the Women's Charter of 1954 whose preamble states that:

"We the women of South Africa, wives and mothers, working women and housewives, Africans, Indians and Coloureds, hereby declare our aim of striving for the removal of all laws, regulations, conventions and customs that discriminate against us as women, and that deprive us in any way of our inherent right to the advantages, responsibilities and opportunities that society offers to any one section of the population."

Our quest for an equal and just society is also inspired by the Freedom Charter which envisions a South Africa where "the rights of people shall be the same regardless of race, colour or sex";

In our on-going struggle for gender equality and women empowerment we depart from the understanding that women's rights are human rights; that nothing must be done for women without them.

We agree fully with the late President Samora Machel that the "liberation of women is not an act of charity". The empowerment of women is not an act of charity but a fundamental necessity for society's full development. Without the full participation of women, the TMR will not succeed.

As a country and as a province we continue to make major strides in redressing gender imbalances, promoting women's rights and addressing the plight of the girl child.

We continue to make progress in enhancing the legal status of women, in changing discriminatory attitudes and practices against women; in increasing women's involvement in decision-making; in making available more employment and other economic opportunities to women as well as in expanding access to quality education and healthcare for women.

Despite the progress we are making, we know too well that a lot more still needs to be done to advance gender equality and women empowerment.

Only two days ago, on National Women's Day, President Zuma launched our country's first Report on the Status of Women in the South African Economy.

This report will be the basis of our work going forward to deepen the gains we have made thus far in building a better South Africa for women.

In Gauteng we count among the progress we are making to advance gender equality and women empowerment the fact that our cabinet is comprised of 60% women.

At the level of Heads of Departments we have continued to strive towards a 50:50 gender parity. Our goal is to make the civil service, especially at higher levels, an employer of choice for women.

We are pleased also to report that as we implement each pillar of the TMR, we continue to maintain a deliberate bias towards the advancement of women.

For instance as part of advancing radical economic transformation we have awarded all linen contracts in our health facilities to women owned companies.

In the last quarter of the 2014/15 financial year, more than 47 000 women benefitted from our public employment programmes. We also recorded 51 women beneficiaries of our interventions in the agricultural sector.

A total of 26% of our total procurement spend for the quarter amounting to R 224 million benefitted women owned enterprises.

As part of advancing accelerated social transformation, in the last quarter of the 2014/15 financial year we managed to place 22 000 women from poor households into various income generating projects. We have also linked 7000 women who receive child support grants to economic opportunities.

We are also intervening to invest in the education of the girl child. In this regard we are pleased to report that over the past three years, 70% of the bursaries we awarded to deserving students to pursue higher education studies went to female students.

We continue to strengthen the fight against violence on women and children. We are also intensifying the support we are offering to victims of social crime, by among others providing places of safety to the victims.

Our challenge going forward is to upscale our interventions to ensure that they reach and benefit more and more women. This is the task we continue to be seized with now and in the future!

Programme Director, last year in August we convened a stakeholder engagement session with the women sector in our province.

On that occasion we presented our vision for the Gauteng City Region as well as our plan for radical Transformation, Modernisation and Re-industrialisation.

We are pleased to report that since our last engagement, we have succeeded in laying a firm basis for the accelerated implementation of the TMR, with a view of building a better Gauteng for women.

We have spent our first year in office focusing primarily on the following areas:

- Building an activist, responsive, caring and clean government;
- Championing the revitalization and mainstreaming of the township economy;
- Engaging with broader society to mobilise support for the GCR vision and TMR priorities
- Reasserting the GCR perspective in all our municipalities and strengthening institutions of the GCR;
- Re-engineering the provincial government to internalise and respond to the imperatives and priorities of the TMR;

As we look back on the work we have done thus far we are convinced now more than ever before the stage is set for the implementation of radical socio-economic transformation in our province.

In particular we are ready to respond in a comprehensive way to structural challenges facing our economy in order to move the Gauteng City Region forward for the benefit of women.

We are set to change the current industrial structure of our economy to privilege manufacturing and industrialisation. We are developing new, modern, innovation-driven industries and we are investing in skills development.

We are also transforming the apartheid spatial economy and human settlement patterns. We are ready to grow the SMME sector as a key driver of growth and are revitalising and mainstreaming the township economy. Again women are central to our interventions in both the transformation of the economy and development of new mega human settlements.

Work has begun to strengthen the capacity of our state to direct development. We have also begun work to identify and enhance the competitiveness of strategic economic sectors of our provincial economy.

We are making significant investments in improving economic and social infrastructure across the province and we have begun forming transformative partnerships between the private and public sector in addressing the developmental challenges we face. The latter was more evident at the recent inaugural Gauteng Infrastructure Investment Summit.

Inspired by the overwhelming success of the Summit, we can report to you today that we will in the coming months announce major public and private sector infrastructure investment projects to not only respond to our infrastructure needs, but also to stimulate economic growth and job creation.

Programme Director, it is the intention of this government to use the TMR to advance gender equality and women empowerment in our province.

We are serious about ensuring that we place women empowerment at the centre of the TMR and all its pillars. Specifically, we want more and more women to be part of the economic mainstream.

When we talk about creating black industrialists, this also applies to women. We want more women black industrialists!

Women must benefit meaningfully from our interventions to revitalise the township economy. Equally, as we industrialize Gauteng and create new industries, women must benefit.

As we respond to the energy challenges facing our province, we expect women owned enterprises to benefit from the economic opportunities that will arise.

As we build new post-apartheid cities and mega human settlements, women owned enterprises must also benefit. As we expand and modernise our public transport infrastructure, women must also benefit.

Women must also be supported to take advantage and benefit from opportunities arising from Africa's new industrial revolution.

Programme Director, we wish to reiterate that in this government the women of Gauteng have a dependable partner that will work with them to advance gender equality and women empowerment.

Let us therefore join hands and move the Gauteng City Region forward for the benefit of women.

I would like to conclude with the words of Rosa Parks, the African-American civil rights women activist who is known for challenging racism in the public transport in the early 20th century:

"I would like to be remembered as a person who wanted to be free so other people would be free...I believe we are here on Planet Earth to live, grow up and do what we can to make this world a better place for all people to enjoy freedom".

Fighting for freedom was not an act of charity. Women's emancipation is not an act of charity either will enhance the freedom of all humanity.

Malibongwe igama lamakhosikazi!
Aluta continua!

Thank you.