

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE PREMIER OF
MPUMALANGA TO THE FIRST SITTING OF THE PROVINCIAL
COUNCIL ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE,
EMNOTWENI ARENA, CITY OF MBOMBELA, ON 06
NOVEMBER 2025**

Co-Chairperson of the GBVF Provincial Council, Ms N Ngwenya

Members of the Executive Council present here today,

Mpumalanga Acting Police Commissioner, Major General, Dr ZM
Mkhwanazi,

Executive Mayors of Ehlanzeni, Gert Sibande and Nkangala
District Municipalities, all the Executive Mayors present,

The Mpumalanga House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders,

Director-General of the OTP, Ms Maggie Skosana and all the
senior officials from the Departments

Members of the Mpumalanga Provincial Council on Gender-
Based Violence and Femicide,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is with a deep sense of purpose and responsibility that we are gathered today for this significant occasion, the inaugural sitting of the Provincial Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF). On this day, 20th of February 2025, we were united in our shared commitment that of combating the scourge of GBVF and upholding our **pledge** to the people of Mpumalanga.

Just to remind all of us, we pledged to:

- **Effectively account, coordinate and provide leadership in fighting Gender-Based Violence and Femicide;**
- **Ensure effective implementation of the Mpumalanga Provincial Strategic plan on GBVF and other relevant prescripts; and**
- **Actively participate in all activities of the council, respect, restore dignity and transform the citizens of Mpumalanga.**

2. As we gather here, we recall the promise we made during the launch of this Council to adopt a coordinated and collaborative approach aimed at eradicating GBVF in our province. In the wake of the global pandemic that is COVID-19, our nation faced another devastating crisis that has claimed far too many lives and inflicted suffering on countless individuals.

3. Gender-Based Violence and Femicide was declared by President Cyril Ramaphosa as the second pandemic. This declaration is a testament to the severity of the situation we find ourselves in. The President recognised that GBVF has reached intolerable levels, impacting individuals across all demographics and eroding the very fabric of our society.
4. This declared second pandemic has further been regarded as a **global scourge**. It is for this reason that it is one of the burning topics at the G20 summit here in our country.
5. The G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group (EWWG), which prioritises addressing Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) as its primary focus, recently concluded its final meeting during South Africa's Presidency. A significant Ministerial Declaration on the Empowerment of Women was adopted, which is anticipated to be endorsed by G20 Leaders at the main G20 Summit to be held on the 22 to 23 November 2025.
6. To share with the Council, the proposed and widely supported outcomes and commitments related to GBVF within the Working Group discussions included:

- **Unified Commitment** of a collective pledge by G20 leaders to strengthen efforts to eliminate GBVF.
- **Legal and Policy Reforms** in implementing comprehensive policies and strengthening national legal frameworks to address and prevent GBVF, including stricter penalties for perpetrators.
- **Enhanced Support Services** toward improving survivor-centred support systems such as shelters, counselling, and legal assistance.
- **Prevention and Awareness**, that is, investing in prevention strategies, public awareness campaigns to challenge harmful gender norms, and **engaging men and boys as allies in the solution**.
- **Leveraging Technology**, in utilising technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support survivors and prevent violence, including addressing new forms of digital threats like **cyberbullying**.
- **Data and Accountability**, to Strengthen research, data collection, and monitoring and evaluation for improved accountability and evidence-based interventions.
- **Collaboration and knowledge exchange**, enabling the creation of platforms for G20 members to share best practices

and successful models for institutional coordination and policy development.

- **Addressing Root Causes**, together recognising that GBVF is rooted in **systemic gender inequality** and addressing intersecting factors like **poverty** and **lack of financial inclusion** for women.

7. The importance of convening this Council in November, especially during a month dedicated to activism against women and child abuse, cannot be overstated. This month marks the start of the 16 Days of Activism campaign, during which we intensify our commitment and efforts to combat violence against women and children.
8. The timing of our meeting allows us to align our discussions with a national movement that seeks to raise awareness, mobilise communities, and hold perpetrators accountable.
9. It is a time to reflect on the devastating impact of GBVF while seeking solutions that will lead us to a safer and more equitable Mpumalanga.

10. As we discuss the factors contributing to GBVF, it is critical to recognise the causes perpetuating this widespread issue. Societal norms that promote toxic masculinity, economic disparity, and a lack of education on moral behaviour are key drivers of violence against vulnerable groups.
11. Furthermore, the normalisation of violence within communities continue to create an environment where abuse is often overlooked or accepted.
12. To mitigate these causes, we must commit ourselves to **public awareness initiatives, education programs, and community engagement** that challenge harmful stereotypes and promote respectful relationships based on **equality and consent**. The role of this Provincial Council in addressing GBVF is paramount in creating a cohesive strategy that tackles these causes head-on.

13. As we embark on our discussions today, it is essential that we develop a clear programme of action that is adhered to by all structures and institutions across the Mpumalanga province.
14. This Council must spearhead initiatives that **empower victims, provide support services, and ensure swift and effective responses to incidents of GBVF**. Additionally, we must establish integrated Rapid Response Teams at the community level to facilitate immediate action and support for those affected by violence.
15. As we strive towards a future free of GBVF, we envision a Mpumalanga where all individuals, regardless of gender, age, or background, can live in safety, dignity, and respect as enshrined in the Bill of Rights.
16. We want communities where victims are supported, justice is served, and prevention is prioritised. Oliver Tambo taught us that: “The fight for freedom must go on until it is won; until our country is free and happy and peaceful as part of the community of man, we cannot rest.”

17. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, like Thomas Sankara, let us agree that there is no genuine social revolution without the emancipation of women.
18. May our eyes never witness and our feet never carry us to a society where half the population remains unheard. Let us listen for the silence of women, feel the tremor of their storm, and sense the intensity of their revolt.
19. Let us not forget that the absence of a strategic plan and coordinated efforts **risks** further entrenching the culture of violence in our province.
20. The absence of a clear framework for addressing this scourge would impede our progress and negatively impact the preparations for the 2026 local government elections. If we fail to confront the realities of GBVF and establish actionable plans, we jeopardise the very foundation of our democracy and the rights of the constituents we serve.

21. In conclusion, as we convene today, let us approach our work with a spirit of collaboration and urgency. Let us collectively identify and address the gaps in our strategies and celebrate the achievements that have been made thus far.

22. Together, we have the power to forge a path toward a future where GBVF is no longer a pandemic that plagues our society. With these words, I hereby declare the first sitting of the Provincial Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide officially open. Let us move forward with resolve, dedication, and a clear vision of what we aim to achieve for the people of Mpumalanga, the Place of the Rising Sun.

23. **Ngiyabonga, Baie Dankie, Ke a leboga, Ha khensa, Ngiyathokoza. I thank you.**