

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MS MC MASILELA, MPL, DURING THE OCASSION OF THE LAUNH OF THE MULTI-PARTY WOMEN'S CAUCUS HELD AT THE CAPITAL HOTEL, MBOMBELA

Thursday, 29 August 2024

Programme Director;

Speaker of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, Imbokodo, Ms. Lindi Masina;

Chief Whip of the Majority Party, Ms. Eva Makhabane;

Members of the Provincial Legislature present;

Representatives of different Political Parties;

Senior Manager of Members' Affairs, Ms. Phindile Makubu-Ndlovu;

Senior Manager of Members' Affairs, Interparliamentary Relations, Mr Thwala;

All women present here;

Sanibonani. Avuxeni. Good Morning

1. Programme Director; the former statesman and globally renowned freedom fighter, Nelson Mandela, asserted that, and I quote: "**Freedom cannot be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression**", unquote.
 2. In his wisdom, the former President fully appreciated the indisputable fact that women are the backdrop of communities and societies in general.
 3. Simply put, President Mandela is reminding us that, women are the cornerstone of societies, and without them, our communities would cease to exist.
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4. During this month, we commemorate the historic march of more than **20 thousand women** to the Union buildings on the 09th of August 1956, to protest against the extension of pass laws to women.
5. On historic that day, those uncompromising and courageous women, from across the country, led by the gallant women like Mama Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, Sophis Williams-De Bruyn, Albert Sisulu, and many others, stood in silence for 30 minutes, and they sang the now famous song: ***Wathint'abafazi Wathint'Imbokodo, Uza Kufa!***
6. It is a historical fact that women have contributed expressively to the process of building a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa.
7. The sad reality is that, in stark contrast to what the visionary forebears who wrote the Women's Charter 72 years ago, women in South Africa live in fear as they bear the worst poverty, economic exclusion and unprecedented nightmare of gender-based violence and femicide.
8. As things stand, women do not live as equals; women live in fear due to violent crimes and senseless gender-based violence. Undoubtedly, several aspects of gender-based violence and femicide are directly linked to the lack of women empowerment.
9. In recognising the critical role women played in bringing about freedom and democracy in South Africa, government has, since the advent of freedom and democracy, placed the aspirations of women at the pinnacle of its agenda.
10. Going forward, the 7th administration will continues to champion the Women's Charter, which is underpinned by a society where women are free from discrimination and prejudice. The Charter also calls for a society which respects women and enforces their rights and inherent human dignity.

11. Now, this Multi-Party Women's Caucus programme, serves as a much-needed platform for women, irrespective of our political affiliation, to collectively reflect and ponder on challenges confronting women in general.
12. As you are aware, this caucus is a combination of women from various political parties as represented in the 7th Provincial Legislature to advance the issues of women in the Province, as it relates to Women Empowerment in the fields of Education, Health Care, GBV and participation of women in the mainstream economy.
13. As government, ours, in collaboration with this progressive multi-party women's caucus, is to put in place policies and strategies which will pave the way for the acceleration of economic growth, for the benefit of women.
14. We are doing this because the economy remains skewed and is not reflective of the demographics of the Province and the country at large. Women remain marginalised and are languishing in the periphery.
15. As we pay homage to women this month, let us give proper direction on how, through government economic stimulus packages, we will open the doors for our women to meaningfully participate in the mainstream economy.
16. Historically, women have been able to support their families through informal businesses in our townships and villages.
17. In this regard, the Department that I am leading is working around the clock to remove existing barriers towards the informal sector growth, our Department is currently finalising the Provincial Informal Sector Policy.

18. Honourable Speaker, we accepted this invitation to come and speak here during this very important gathering in order to reaffirm our commitment to the agenda of women empowerment at a grand scale.
19. We reaffirm our commitment to work with other strategic partners, such as this caucus, in pursuing the noble agenda of empowering women in the economic landscape.
20. Equally, women have a responsibility to take advantage of government interventions and programmes, aimed at inculcating the spirit of women entrepreneurship.
21. Without sounding controversial, I implore all women in particular and parliamentarians in general to do away with the **PHD (Pull Her Down) Syndrome** which we are associated with. We have a responsibility to uplift each other.
22. As a caucus, we must therefore remain firm and united beyond party lines in our conviction, particularly when championing the aspirations of women, who are by and large, the previously disadvantaged group.
23. As I draw to a close, let me remind you that we are gathered here this morning to share ideas and strategies on how to dismantle the unrelenting hegemony that our male counterparts have been enjoying since time immemorial. Let us seize the moment, by providing strategic and thought leadership.
24. In conclusion, as leaders, for us to escape being judged harshly by history, we have a collective responsibility to do everything in our power, to unlock business opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the economy. The time to postulate or grandstand is over.

Wathint' Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo – Malibongwe Igama Lamakhosikazi!

I thank you!