

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PREMIER OF MPUMALANGA
PROVINCE, HON RM MTSHWENI, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
COMMEMORATION OF WOMEN'S DAY**

Date: 09 August 2018

Venue: Kwaggafontein, Thembisile Hani LM

Programme Director;

Honourable Members of the Executive Council;

**Your Excellency, the Executive Mayor of Nkangala District
Municipality, Councillor S. Masilela;**

**Your Excellency our host the Executive Mayor of Thembisile Hani
Local Municipality Councilor N. Mtsweni;**

Your Excellences Executive Mayors and Councillors in our midst;

**The Acting Director-General Mr Matthew Mohlasedi, Heads of
Department and all senior government officials;**

Municipal Managers in our midst;

**Representatives of labour, business, religious and other
community-based organisations;**

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sanibonani

1. Programme Director, it is indeed a singular honour to stand before you as we celebrate the 62nd anniversary of the Women led March to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956. On that day, an estimated 20 000 women of all races, class and creeds gathered to protested against the extension of Pass Laws.
2. This year's commemoration is unique as it coincides with the centenary commemoration of the lives of gallant icons of our struggle for liberation, uMama Albertina Sisulu and uTata Nelson Mandela.
3. uMama Sisulu embodied selfless leadership and an unwavering commitment to serving the interests of our people. These are the virtues that we, as public representatives, must aspire to.
4. Therefore, with us commemorating Women's day, it would be remiss for us to not expand on the role uMama Sisulu played in the attainment of our emancipation.
5. uMama Sisulu was one of the many lights that lit up a generation that fought on the **correct** side of the greatest moral battle of the last century, the battle against apartheid.

6. In his seminal autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom, uTata Nelson Mandela captured it quite aptly when he said and I quote, ***“Upon marrying Walter Sisulu, Albertina Sisulu also married the African National Congress and by so doing committed herself, her life, her family to the struggle for the restoration of the liberty of the African people”*** close quote.
7. On the 9th of August 1956, multitudes of women, ably led by imbhokodo such as ***uMama Albertina Sisulu ,Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, Lilian Ngoyi and Helen Joseph*** delivered petitions containing 100 000 signatures to the Office of the then Prime Minister JG Strijdom resisting the extension of pass laws to women.
8. That march and the central coordinating role played by ***uMama Albertina Sisulu*** will forever be heralded in the annals of our history as momentous display of the political strength, solidarity and fortitude of women. It served and continues to serve as the proverbial North Star highlighting the virtues of female leadership. I stand before you today, as the first female Premier of the Mpumalanga Province as a testament of the road ***uMama Albertina Sisulu*** paved for the rest of us.

9. The significance of what was achieved 62 years ago on this day **must not** be understated. Every year on this day, South Africans of all genders **must** pay homage to the women of our nation, to the **mothers, the wives, the sisters and daughters** who fought tirelessly and valiantly against the crime against humanity that was the Apartheid regime.

10. Programme Director, this year's commemoration takes place against the backdrop of continuous calls for gender parity. It is a well-established fact that males are availed more economic opportunities than women. The recently released 2018 gender equality report outlines that a patriarchal or a male centred society is guaranteed to underperform simply because half the workforce is disadvantaged. In order for South Africa to achieve our neo-developmental goals, it is imperative to empower women and remunerate them accordingly.

11. As a prelude to the recently concluded BRICS Summit, the Mpumalanga Province had the privilege of hosting the BRICS labour group summit. One of the key observations by representatives of the BRICS group of countries was that more women are attending tertiary institutions than their male counterparts, this results in more women entering the labour force. Gender parity in remuneration is critical as the gradual move to the fourth industrial revolution in emerging economies such as South Africa will be led by women.

12. We therefore commit ourselves as government and we also challenge the private sector to equally commit to programmes that will attract and retain more women in the labour market and in better quality jobs.
13. We acknowledge that **more and better** jobs for women are not just a matter of justice and fairness, but also smart economics. Gender equality is the key to prosperous economies and inclusive sustainable growth.
14. We must ,therefore , reduce vertical and horizontal occupational segregation , boost women's entrepreneurship, **firmly** address discrimination in remuneration , place a fair value on women's work, enhance the quality and safety of working environments, including by protecting women against gender based violence. We should ensure that through fair and market related remuneration, both women and men are able to reconcile paid employment with family responsibilities.
15. Our government has developed a number of programmes and projects which are targeted at empowering women and youth. These includes the government's nutrition programme where emerging farmers and producers are afforded an opportunity to supply school feeding schemes and hospitals with fresh produce.

16. We recently launched an enterprise development programme whose main objective is to develop and mould emerging black industrialists from villages and townships. Government infrastructural projects like the building of schools, roads, clinics and hospitals are directed to procure materials like door frames, window frames, lintels , paving and building bricks from emerging manufacturers. **We call upon our women to fully participate on these programmes. Our development agency MEGA has entered into an agreement with Standard Bank to provide bridging finance to small and emerging entrepreneurs who need funding to start their businesses.**

17. **Programme Director, we have seen remarkable improvement in the number of women representing us in the legislatures and other Houses of parliament.**

18. Following the advent of our democratic dispensation, the representation of women in the National Assembly stood at 27, 7%. In 1999 that figure increased to 30% and then to 32.7% in 2004. The figure continues to improve and the representation of women in the National Assembly currently sits at 41.8%. **Yes, there remains significant room for growth, but it is encouraging to note the importance that the ruling party the African National Congress attaches to gender parity.**

19. The election of ***Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma*** in July 2012 as the first woman in Africa to chair the African Union Commission; the appointment of ***Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka***, as the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women; and the strategic positioning of other South African women such as ***Ms Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi***, Special Gender Envoy to the African Development Bank; ***Ms Rashida Manjoo***, Special Rapporteur on Violence against women, its causes and consequences; the appointment of ***Judge Navi Pillay*** as the High Commissioner for Human Rights and formerly as a judge in the International Criminal Court (ICC) as well as the recent appointment of ***Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng*** as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town is an indication of the abundant capacity possessed by women and the impact that women in executive roles have in winning the trust and confidence of citizens in South Africa, on the continent and internationally.
20. We urge Local Government to follow this trend and ensure that more women are appointed to strategic roles as s54 and s56 managers in Municipalities. It is unacceptable that 24 years after the advent of democracy, women constitute a mere 24% of s54 and s56 Managers appointments in our Municipalities.
21. Programme Director, today's commemoration also takes place against a backdrop of an unacceptable increase in the levels of violence and brutality against women in our society.

22. Not a day passes without us reading or hearing about violent crimes committed against women at home, campuses and in public spaces. Gender based violence is the most frequently committed crime and is mostly committed by people known to the victim. In most cases and largely due to societal imbalances as a result of a lack of gender parity, the victims are largely financially dependent on the perpetrators and as a result, no recourse is sought.
23. Our law enforcement agencies must ensure that gender based violence is treated as a priority crime and the mechanisms of justice must aid our war against gender based violence in a manner that is consistent with purport, spirit and objective of our enabling legislation and our progressive Constitution.
24. Programme Director, it is important to note the significant role that has been played by several NGO's in assisting the victims of gender based violence. Through the Department of Social Development, the Provincial Government shall continue to support and strengthen civil society groups so that prevention of violence is anchored in the centres of our communities.

25. We call upon men to not be silent bystanders because in a lot of instances, gender based violence is attributable to toxic masculinity that is firmly rooted in patriarchy. We must ensure that men, especially young boys, do not see patriarchy as their heritage. If we change the mind-set and establish a different value system, a significant portion of the war against gender based violence shall be won.
26. Programme Director, as the ANC led government we reaffirm our commitment to universal and sustainable social security system, including social protection floors, as an integral part of our policies to promote inclusive growth and social cohesion.
27. We have made significant progress in improving our social security system. Let me also add my government's sincere apologies to ***abogogo nabomkhulu*** who found themselves without their pensions due to the hand over from the service provider to the post office and private banking accounts. Our government is working hard to make sure that this situation is avoided in future.

Malibongwe!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I thank You.