

Address by Honourable Premier of Mpumalanga TSP Makwetla at the provincial celebrations of national Women's Day at Kinross Sasol Club, Govan Mbeki Municipality, Gert Sibande

9 August 2008

Programme director

The speaker of our provincial legislature and chairperson of the provincial chapter of the Progressive Women's Movement (PWMSA)

Honourable MECs

Members of Parliament

Members of the Mpumalanga Legislature

Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders and all traditional leaders present

Honourable mayors and councillors

Women leaders from all women's organisations and associations in the province

Women of Mpumalanga and residents of Gert Sibande District and our province at Large

Colleagues, comrades and friends.

Programme director, allow me to begin my remarks today by stating the obvious, which is that, I, too, am also a son to another woman. This abiding truth is common knowledge, but those who are not so wise tend to forget this fact. That is when foolish things can be expected to happen.

Today marks 52 years since the historic women's anti pass march to Pretoria in 1956. We celebrate this day as an important reminder about the role that women have played over the years in the struggle for social transformation to bring about freedom, democracy, and equality in our country.

It is the celebration of a legacy that continues to inspire all of us to believe in the power of women to change the world for the better. It is a lasting legacy from which future generations will continue to draw inspiration to advance the goals of women's socio-economic emancipation in our society.

Namhlanje sigubha usuku olusikhumbuza ukuzinikela kwabantu besifazane emzabalazweni wokulwela ubulungiswa nentando yeningi. Lolusuku futhi luwumgubho wokunqoba nokuzinikela kwabantu besifazane emzabalazweni wokuguqula isimo sokubusa ngengcinezelo ukuze kwakhiwe umbuso owakhelwe phezu komthethosisekelo ohlonipha amalungelo abantu ngaphandle kokucwasa ngobulili, ubuhlanga, noma ngenkolo.

Ngonyaka ka 1956, abantu besifazane batshengisa ubuqhawe ngokukwazi ukuhlangana ndawonde ukuze balwe nokuphathwa kodompasi. Phela abantu abanyama babephoqwa ukuthi baphathe odompasi ngasosonke isikhathi uma besemadolobheni. Lokhu kwakuyindlela yokucinezela nokuvimba inkululeko yabantu abanyama. Ukutshengisa ukuthukuthela kwabo, abantu besifazane bakhankasa bamasha ndawonye baya ePitoli ukuze bathule izikahalazo zabo kuhulumeni wen gcinezelo.

Ubuqhawe babantu besifazane buyohlala buyigugu elihlala njalo likhuthaza izizukulwane ngezizukulwane ukuthi zilwele amalungelo abantu, ukulingana ngobulili kanye nokukhululeka kwabantu besifazane emikhakheni yonke yempilo.

Today provides us an opportunity to pay homage to women whose heroism, sacrifices, and commitment contributed immensely to the creation of a right-based South African society underpinned by the values and ideals of justice, equality, human dignity, respect, and human liberties. We must be reminded that women's rights are human rights, which all of us should protect and nourish as part of building a caring society.

As we confront the developmental challenges of our times, we should equally continue to pursue the objectives of gender equality and equalisation of socio economic opportunities for women. Improved access to basic services, education, health, affordable housing and employment is necessary to address poverty challenges that face the majority of women, particularly rural women who continue to bear the indignity of socio economic deprivation, unemployment and starvation.

Programme director, women of the province recently gathered to establish the provincial chapter of the Progressive Women's Movement. This is an important institutional vehicle to bring women of the province together to engage on social transformation and development challenges facing women at different levels of society.

It is a movement that aims to bring about unity among women to fight poverty and underdevelopment. In the spirit reminiscent of the 1956 women, we commend the women of the province for standing together, across race, class and social status, to articulate and affirm women's development needs in different sectors of our society.

Today's theme of " Business Unusual All Power to Women" calls for a collective commitment to the empowerment of women through the creation of an enabling environment that fosters full and equal participation by women in leadership and decision making levels across the political, judiciary, economic, social and cultural spheres.

We must acknowledge that in spite of commendable successes in the empowerment of women, the legacy of triple oppression of race, class and gender that served to subjugate women in the apartheid era continues to weigh heavily on particular segments of women who remain vulnerable and poor.

Siyazi sonke ukuthi uhulumeni ubeke lonyaka njengonyaka lapho kufanele zonke izinhlaka zikahulumeni zisebenze ngamandla nangokuzimisela okweqile ukuqiniseka ukuthi abantu bathola izinsiza zikahulumeni nentuthuko ukuze balwe nobuphofu nobubha. Indlela yokunikeza abantu besifazane amandla ikhomba ukuthi sonke kufanele sizinikele ekwakheni isimo esivula amathuba ukuze abantu besifazane babambe iqhaza ezinhakeni zokuphatha kuyo yonke imikhakha. Lapha sikhuluma ngokubamba iqhaza nokuphatha kwezombusazwe, kwezomthetho, kwezomphakathi, kwezamasiko kanye nakwezomnotho.

Nakuba inkululeko ilethe ukuthuthuka okubonakalyo kubantu besifazane, kufanele sazi ukuthi izinselelo ziseningi ekufanele sibhekane nazo. Ukucindezeleka kwabantu besifazane okungunxantathu okufaka ubuhlanga, ubulili kanye nesigaba sempilo emphakathini okwakukhona ngesikhathi sobandlululo, kuyaqhubeka nokuba nomthelela oletha ukuhlupheka kubantu besifazane abaningi. Kango-ke kufanele sisebenze kanzima ukuthuthukisa abantu besifazanaze ukuze baphume engcindezelweni yokuhlupheka. Kufanele izinhlelo zentuthuko kuyo yonke imikhakha yempilo iphakamise izinjongo ezihlose ukuthuthukisa izimpilo zabantu besifazane.

The economic disempowerment of women is strongly related to their role in the labour market. Indeed, the draft anti poverty strategy that was tabled at national cabinet in May this year argued that poverty is the consequence of either unemployment or low wages. The dual role of women in the productive and reproductive spheres plays a key role in making female headed households vulnerable to poverty.

This is because women, and particularly those that are single parents, are vulnerable to poverty especially when they have young children because the responsibility for young children makes it difficult to obtain work. In many instances, the responsibility to bring up children in many households lies with women.

The official labour market statistics illustrate that there is a distinct gender bias in Mpumalanga's labour market, which mirrors the national situation. In September 2007, the unemployment rate for females was 30.3% compared to 16.7%, for males. This is of particular concern because labour market participation rates are much lower for women than for men. In 2007, 51.3% of Mpumalanga's female population of working age were economically active, compared to a participation rate of 66.5% for men.

Research suggests that the vast majority of discouraged workers are African women residing in the former Bantustan areas. These women would enthusiastically accept any form of wage employment, but live in areas where there is no economic opportunity of any kind and cannot afford the costs associated with seeking work elsewhere.

If we are to empower women and effectively combat poverty, we cannot ignore the plight of these female headed households, which are trapped in the second economy, unable to access opportunities in the first economy and doomed to inter generational poverty.

Ucwaningo lukhombisa ukuthi abantu abaningi abangasebenzi abantu besifazane, ikakhulukazi labo abahlala ezindaweni ezazibizwa ngezabelo zabantu abamnyama ngesikhathi sobandlululo, 'ama-Bantustans'. Ngenxa

yokuthi isimo somnotho siphansi kulezizindawo, kunzima kakhulu ukuthola imisebenzi enikeza abantu besifazane amaholo okuziphilisa nokulwa nobuphofu. Imizi eminingi ehluphekayo iphethwe abantu besifazane okumele bakhulise izingane nakuba bengasebenzi.

Nakuba iningi labo lizimisele ukwamukela noma imuphi umsebenzi oqhamukayo, inkinga enkulu kakhulu ukuthi abanayo imali yokugibela beyofuna imisebenzi ezindaweni eziqhelile nalapho behlala khona. Ngako ke kubalulekile ukuthi basizwe ngokuthola amathuba emisebenzi ukuze bekwazi ukulwa nobuphofu nobubha. Njengohulumeni kubalulekile ukuthi izinhlelo zentuthuko zilethwe kulezizindawo ukuze kuvuleke amathuba emisebenzi.

Kufanele singakhohlwa ukuthi ukukhululeka kwabantu besifazane kulele ekuthuthukisweni kwabo kwezomnotho. Kufanele kube nokulingana ngobulili ekutholeni amathuba emfundo, ukuthuthukiswa kwamakhono, amathuba emisebenzi kanye nezinsiza ezifana namanzi, ugesi, izindlu nezempilo.

Critically, we need to speed up the economic empowerment of women to address huge inequalities between men and women in terms of income levels and access to development opportunities. In doing this, we must seek to expand development opportunities to South Africa's large predominantly impoverished rural population, the majority of whom are women.

In the face of escalating global food prices and threats of food insecurity, we should encourage women to focus endeavours on agricultural production initiatives to ensure that we enhance our capacities to produce food at household level.

As a province, we are providing support to households to create opportunities for sustainable livelihoods through the implementation of programmes such as the Agricultural Starter Packs and Masibuyel'emasimini, Siyantentela to fight poverty and food security.

These programmes benefit female headed households. For instance, our 'Siyantentela' programme in the Department of Roads and Transport provide opportunities for poor women in female headed households to be involved road maintenance projects in areas where they live. Since its inception in 2005, Siyantentela is benefiting 1 855 women, bringing much relief to these poverty stricken families. By the end of the current financial year, we intend to increase this number to 2 000 women as part of scaling up the implementation of Siyantentela.

Our commitment as a provincial government is ensuring that we open up job opportunities for women to participate in government's expanded public works programme. We are also creating opportunities to develop women owned enterprises, and making sure that we improve access to finance and business support to women owned enterprises. We encourage women to take advantage of opportunities offered by government in construction, tourism, and many other sectors of the economy.

Njengohulumeni wesifundazwe sizimisele ukuvula amathuba emisebenzi ezinhlelweni zokuthuthuka zikahulumeni. Sikhuluma nje uhlelo lukahulumeni oulbizwa nge 'Expanded Public Works Programme' sibeke isibalo esingu 40% njengomgomo wenanali lemisebenzi okunele izuzwe ngabantu besifazane. Emathubeni omsebenzi angu 70 418 kusukela ekuqaleni kwaloluhlelo ngonyaka ka 2004 kuze kufike ekupheleni konyaka odlule (Dec 2007), kuyintokozo ukubona ukuthi u 58% walemisebenzi waya kubantu besifazane.

Ngaphezu kwalokhu, sizebenza kanzima ukuqiniseka ukuthi sandisa izinkampani zabantu besifazane. Njengohulumeni sinezinhlaka ezibhekene nokubolekisa imali kubantu besifazane abafisa ukuqala amabhizinisi emikhakheni yokwakha, ezokuvakasha kanye neminye eminingi imikhakha kwezomnotho. Njengohulumeni sezinhlelo zokuthuthukisa amakhono abantu besifazane ekuphatheni amabhizinisi.

Njengoba sigubha usuku lwabantu besifazane namuhla, kufanele sikhuthaze bonke abantu besifazane abafuna ukuzithuthukisa ukuthi basebenzise amathuba alethwa nguhulumeni ukuze bazithuthukise, bathole namathuba okuthola imiholo ukuze phela baxoshe ikati eziko.

Alongside these initiatives, we are expanding skills development opportunities for women to build the necessary capabilities for women to participate meaningfully in the mainstream economy. As government, we have made progress in expanding the opportunities for women to occupy management positions within government. Our

commitment to transform both the senior and middle management echelons in the provincial administration is beginning to bear fruit.

It is gratifying that women occupy 31% and 32% of positions in middle and senior management respectively. This level of performance gives us hope that by the end March next year, we will be able to reach 50% in line with the national target. Central to the empowerment of women is our ability to expand access to education to female children so that there is increased participation by female children/learners in the education system.

This is a necessary investment to ensure that there is equitable gender distribution in the education system. Female enrolments in the system remain less at 49,64% to a 50,36% male enrolment. Our assessment is that female enrolment growth in the last ten years has made big strides and will reach equity targets of the Millennium Development Goals by 2010. It is encouraging that the majority of students who enrol and pass matric exams are female.

As a Province, we are also paying particular attention to improving access to health services by women, especially in remote rural areas. In addition to expanding primary health care centres, we are deploying mobile clinics in many parts of the province to expand access to health care services. We acknowledge that women and young girls are hard hit by the scourge of HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In this regard, we will continue to improve the infrastructure, and access to comprehensive care management and treatment, voluntary counselling and testing, as well as the prevention of mother child transmission in order to ensure that we mitigate the spread and impact of this devastating pandemic.

Njengohulumeni sizimisele ukuthi sithuthukise izinhlelo eziqiniseka ukuthi abantu besifazane bathola usizo lwezempilo ngaso sonke isikhathi ezindaweni lapho behlala khona. Ukwandisa imitholampilo ezindaweni ezisemaphandleni, sinohlelo lokutshala imitholampilo engomahamba nendlwana (mobile services) ezingxenyeni eziningi zesifundazwe. Siyazi ukuthi ingculaza nesandulela sayo ihlasela kakhulu abantu besifazane, ikakhulukazi amantomabzane asemancenane. Njengohulumeni sizimisele ukwandinsa inqalasisizinda eletha izinsiza eziqondene nokwelapha, ukunakekela, kanye nokuvimba ukubhebhetheka kwalesifo.

Programme director, abuse and violence towards women and girls remain the most widespread violations of fundamental human rights that we, as society, should not countenance. Gender based violence continues to undermine a culture of human rights, equality and human dignity.

Women and children continue to be victims of rape and various forms of abuse in the workplace. As we celebrate Women's Day today, we must galvanise our collective energies to fight against violence perpetrated against women and girl children. As women, you have the power to stop women abuse, murder and rape.

In celebrating Women's Day, we must commit to honouring the legacy and contribution of women to the creation of caring South African society characterised by the values of human dignity, gender equality and democratic liberties. In the same vein, we must share a collective responsibility to pursue the agenda of women emancipation and equalization of socio economic development opportunities.

It is within our power to nurture a morally upright society that treats women with respect and dignity, and affirm women's capabilities as change agents to transform our society for the better.

Viva Women of South Africa Viva!
Enjoy Women's Day.

Thank you