



**MINISTRY IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR WOMEN, YOUTH AND
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
MINISTER SINDISIWE CHIKUNGA MP,
AT THE FIRST TECHNICAL MEETING OF THE G20
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN'S WORKING GROUP (EWWG)
VIRTUAL PLATFORM
ON 17 FEBRUARY 2025**

- Chairperson of the meeting and Director-General of the Department, Advocate Mikateko Maluleke,
- Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Steve Letsike,
- Distinguish representatives from the G20 Member States,
- Distinguish representatives from guest countries,
- United Nations Women country representative, Aleta Miller

- Our Esteemed partners, including: UN Agencies, the Institute for Economic Justice, the Development, the University of Cape Town, Tshwane University of Technology, the Banking Association of South Africa and the African Development Bank
- Colleagues

Good morning, good afternoon or good evening – depending on where you are in the world!

A. Introduction

It is with great honour that I extend to you our **warm and friendly greetings** on behalf of our Government, our President, His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, and all 62 million South Africans. We welcome you to this first meeting of the G20 Working Group on Women's Empowerment and express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has managed to attend.

Although our initial meeting is taking place virtually, we very much look forward to welcoming all of you in person. We are eager to share with you our country's warm atmosphere, our people's exceptional hospitality, and our

rich history of struggle and dedication to the realization of freedom, equality, and dignity for all.

B. SOUTH AFRICA TO BUILD ON BRAZIL AND INDIA'S LEGACY AND CHAIRSHIP OF THE WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

From the onset, we wish to extend our sincere gratitude to Brazil and India for laying such a strong foundation for the world to reimagine the empowerment of women as a comprehensive, far-reaching, people-centred, indivisible, and developmental imperative.

We congratulate Brazil for the excellent work carried out under its memorable G20 Presidency. We commend the institutionalization of this very Working Group within the G20 - a giant step forward in our collective struggle to elevate women's interests and their full participation in **all spheres of life where decisions are made and power is exercised**.

We draw direct inspiration from the **2024 Rio De Janeiro Leaders' Declaration**, where our leaders did not only

celebrate the inaugural convening of this very Working Group , but also resolved as follows:

“We reaffirm our full commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. We encourage women-led development and will promote the full, equal, effective and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all sectors and at all levels of the economy, which is crucial to the growth of global GDP. Acknowledging that gender-based violence, including sexual violence against women and girls, is alarmingly high across public and private spheres, we condemn every form of discrimination against women and girls and recall our commitment to end gender-based violence including sexual violence and combat misogyny online and offline. We commit to promoting gender equality in paid and unpaid care work to ensure equal, full and meaningful participation of women in the economy, by promoting social and gender co-responsibility, encouraging and facilitating men's and boys”.

C. CONTEXT AND SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Programmes Director,

As we convene this working group meeting, the global community is characterised by **untenable disparities, discontent, distrust, and democracies at crossroads.**

The global community's inability to arrest rising rates of poverty, inequality and unemployment has pushed the poor further into the margins of socio-economic opportunities. The prevailing levels of economic fragility and uncertainty denote **the need for all of us to re-imagine alternative pathways** to a just, equitable , humane and collectively prosperous society.

With **only 15% of the SDGs on** track to be achieved by 2030, the road ahead will be steep. Ongoing debt pressures continue to push millions into extreme poverty, as debt servicing costs continue to divert resources away from **education, health, and other public goods.**

Of particular concern to the African continent, food insecurity threatens the very future we seek to build. Our idea of food security needs to go beyond the immediate availability of food to include the restoration of historically marginalized communities and their sovereignty over their food systems. We are only truly food secure when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and cultural preferences—while also acknowledging and addressing the historical injustices that have shaped current food inequities. Our Working Group thus presents an opportune moment to draw insights from each other's experiences and make the most of emerging opportunities.

D. OUR G20 PRESIDENCY THEME AND THE CONTINENT

Against this backdrop, South Africa has assumed the G20 Presidency under the theme “**Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability**”—a theme that reflects South Africa’s commitment to building on the efforts and successes of

previous G20 Presidencies while advancing the sustainable development agenda.

The collective essence of **Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability** aligns with the values enshrined in our Constitution—a cornerstone of our constitutional democracy that not only guides South Africa's internal affairs but also shapes how we engage with the rest of the world.

This theme further underscores our commitment to making this a **G20 Presidency of the African continent**, positioning Africa's increasingly catalytic role at the forefront of global well-being.

- **Solidarity** underscores our vision for a people-centred, development-oriented, and inclusive future.
- **Equality** represents our commitment to a collectively just, equitable and humane future for all
- **Sustainability** reflects our commitment to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

This theme has also informed three high-level deliverables of South Africa's **G20 Presidency that will guide our work:**

- 1. Inclusive Economic Growth, Industrialisation, Employment and Reduced Inequality**
- 2. Food Security**
- 3. Artificial Intelligence, Data Governance and Innovation for Sustainable Development**

C. OUR WORKING GROUP PRIORITIES

In the context of the G20 Working Group for the Empowerment of Women, South Africa will be proposing the following three key priorities:

- **Key Priority 1:** Policy perspectives on the care economy—paid and unpaid care work and household responsibilities.
- **Key Priority 2:** Promoting financial inclusion of and for women.
- **Key Priority 3:** Addressing gender-based violence and femicide.

These three priorities are not exclusive; they are **mutually reinforcing**. The **care economy**, for instance, is **foundational** to the future of **global well-being**. As long as those at the bottom of the economic ladder—**predominantly women**—remain on the margins of under-compensated economic activities, **inclusive economic growth** and **financial inclusion**, which is the second priority, will remain elusive.

Globally, **women spend an estimated two to ten times more hours than men on unpaid care work**, significantly limiting their ability to pursue **paid employment, education, and leadership opportunities**. The **World Economic Forum** estimates that if unpaid care work were compensated, it would account for approximately **9% of global GDP**. Yet, the **social and economic value** of the care economy remains **largely invisible**.

For us, **financial inclusion** is fundamentally about ensuring that women from all walks of life have access to land and related productive assets to uplift themselves and their communities. It is about fostering gender-

responsive supply chains and leveraging public procurement to achieve fair and equitable socio-economic relations. It is about modernizing the capacity of women-owned businesses to ensure they produce, supply, and distribute high-quality goods and services—equipped with the latest manufacturing technologies including Artificial Intelligence (AI), innovation, data and production tools.

Above all, we firmly believe that the empowerment of women will remain a distant dream unless we collectively deliver a decisive blow to the prevalence of **gender-based violence and femicide**.

Programme Director,

As we mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)—a transformative blueprint unanimously adopted by 189 countries to advance women's rights and achieve gender equality, I am confident that our deliberations in this working group will strengthen our common position as we head to New York.

As I conclude, I am reminded of the words of our Former President, Nelson Mandela, who so profoundly stated:

"The legacy of oppression weighs heavily on women. As long as women are bound by poverty and as long as they are looked down upon, human rights will lack substance. As long as a nation refuses to acknowledge the equal role of more than half of itself, it is doomed to failure."

Once again, thank you very much for this opportunity. I look forward to our engagement and you are once again warmly welcomed to this important meeting of the G20 working on Women Empowerment.

I thank you.