



**MINISTRY IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR WOMEN, YOUTH
AND PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
HONOURABLE MINISTER SINDISIWE CHIKUNGA, MP
AT THE THIRD TECHNICAL MEETING OF THE G20
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN WORKING GROUP (EWWG)**
Skukuza Conference Centre, Kruger National Park,
Mpumalanga Province
Tuesday, 1 July 2025 | 9:00 – 11:00

- Programme Director, Dr Besani Baloyi
- Premier of Mpumalanga Province, Honourable Mandla P. Ndlovu
- Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Steve Letsike,
- Director-General of the Department, Advocate Mikateko Maluleke,
- Distinguished representatives from the G20 Member States,
- Distinguished representatives from guest countries,
- United Nations Women country representative
- Our Esteemed partners, including: UN Agencies, the Institute for Economic Justice, and our academic and research institutions
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning, and Welcome to Mpumalanga, the **Province of the Rising Sun**.
Premier, we value your unwavering support as we host the **first-ever G20
Presidency on African soil**. South Africa may chair the process, but we view this
moment as **Africa's G20 and the People's G20**.

As such, our department and the Provincial Government held a community engagement nearly two weeks ago in Mkhondo with the ordinary South African women.

My hope colleagues is that the issues they raised will surface in every session of this Technical Meeting. Our conversations here mean little if they do not reflect the voices we heard in Mkhondo—and those of citizens across all G20 nations—and if they do not translate into real improvements in their daily lives.

With that mandate clear, I wish you well with your deliberations and look forward to focused, results-driven discussions over the next few days.

2 | WHY MPUMALANGA MATTERS

Programme Director, we chose Mpumalanga with purpose: it is the province that powers, feeds and connects South Africa — and by extension, much of Southern African Development Community. Straddling the Maputo-Gauteng corridor, it links our industrial heartland to Mozambique and Eswatini, making it a critical logistics gateway for regional trade. Its coal-fired stations generate the bulk of our national electricity; its fertile valleys lead national output in citrus, sugarcane and macadamia nuts; and its world-famous parks draw millions of tourists each year. In short, Mpumalanga sits at the intersection of energy, agriculture, logistics and tourism — the very value chains in which women must now claim their full, equitable share.

Colleagues, just beyond these conference walls the turbines of Kusile, Duvha and Kendal roar day and night, supplying **nearly four-fifths of South Africa's electricity**. That power keeps our factories humming and our homes lit—but it also places Mpumalanga at the epicentre of a delicate mission of guiding a **Just Energy Transition** that cuts carbon without cutting livelihoods, especially for the women who hold coal communities together.

Those same valleys that fuel our grid also feed our people. Through the new **Nkomazi Special Economic Zone**, these harvests are being transformed into juices, bio-chemicals and fertilisers—value chains that must now open their doors to women farmers, processors and exporters.

So, when we speak of women's economic empowerment over the next few days, let us remember: the dividends of energy reform and agro-processing must flow into the very hands that have long carried both unpaid care and subsistence farming.

Programme Director,

Beyond its coal seams and citrus fields, **Mpumalanga hosts** the mighty Kruger National Park—our host venue— which draws **over 1.5 million visitors a year**, fuelling lodges, craft markets and conservation jobs that put food on thousands of household tables. Each traveller who leaves with a photograph of a sunrise over the Sabie River becomes an ambassador for our country's natural splendour and, by extension, our soft power.

But this province is more than a postcard; it is essential **for regional growth**. Steel from Middelburg, fuel and chemicals from Secunda, timber from its escarpments, and electricity from its power stations feed national supply chains and keep factories from Johannesburg to Gqeberha running. The Maputo–Gauteng corridor that cuts through these valleys turns local truck stops into continental marketplaces, stitching South Africa to Mozambique, Eswatini and the wider SADC economy.

Colleagues, I highlight these strengths so that our deliberations on the care economy are not abstract. Our task is to ensure that the energy transition, the tourism boom and the manufacturing spine you see here translate into **real ownership, decent jobs and fair returns for the women who already carry this province's invisible labour on their shoulders**.

3 | PRIORITIES & PROGRESS

Colleagues, our presidency flies the banner “**Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability.**” Guided by that call, this Working Group has fastened on three priorities:

1. **Valuing the care economy**—both paid and unpaid;
2. **Unlocking genuine financial inclusion for women;**
3. **Eradicating gender-based violence and femicide.**

I thank every delegate, partner and TROIKA member for the remarkable unity you have shown around these goals. That solidarity is the fuel driving us toward a transformative Ministerial Declaration.

Part of what have we achieved since Pretoria are the following?

First, an intensive **Global Conference on Financial Inclusion** convened ministers, central banks, fintech innovators and grassroots cooperatives. Together we drafted pathways to: gender-responsive land and credit policies; removal of non-tariff barriers that choke cross-border trade by women; and a long-overdue redesign of the global financial architecture so it finally serves the people who till the soil and run the tuckshops.

Second, we held a **C-suite round-table** with the heads of Africa's largest banks. They committed to piloting demand-driven products for micro- and small-scale women entrepreneurs, investing in digital literacy, and linking every branch's performance bonus to measurable inclusion targets.

Third, here in Mpumalanga we ran a **provincial stakeholder dialogue** that pulled community leaders, youth collectives and survivor networks into the G20 tent. They are now co-creating legacy projects—solar-powered childcare centres, women-owned agro-processing hubs and survivor-run one-stop GBV services—that will outlive South Africa's presidency.

These milestones confirm that our agenda is no longer a set of good ideas; it is a living programme of action poised for global scale.

4 | THE CARE ECONOMY — THE TEST OF SOLIDARITY, EQUALITY & SUSTAINABILITY

Programme Director, economies are usually described in the language of mines, factories and markets. Yet every miner, factory-hand and trader is first nurtured by someone who cooks, cleans, teaches, heals and consoles. That mostly unpaid, often under-paid labour is the *care economy*—the hidden engine that keeps the visible economy running.

4.1 The True Value of Care

The International Labour Organization estimates that if we costed all paid and unpaid care work it would equal **about 40 percent of global GDP and 380 million jobs**. Remove care and almost half the world's economic value would evaporate overnight. Care sustains life, reproduces the workforce and binds communities across generations. It ranges from formal sectors—health, education, childcare—to the vast realm of unpaid tasks that women shoulder daily. Treating it as peripheral is not a statistical error; it is an act of economic self-harm rooted in patriarchal thinking.

4.2 A Gendered Burden

Across the globe **women perform roughly three times more unpaid care work than men**. This imbalance generates the well-known “care penalty”: stalled careers, lower wages and fragile pensions. We saw the evidence during COVID-19. When schools closed and hospitals strained, women exited the labour market in droves—proof that GDP stalls when care systems crack. Here in Mpumalanga, women in full-time agriculture still devote an average of five unpaid care hours *before* they reach the fields; similar patterns run through mining and tourism towns.

4.3 Why Inaction Is Expensive

Ignoring care work triggers three heavy costs. **First, economic loss:** untapped female labour shrinks national income and tax revenue. **Second, generational poverty:** girls leave school to replace absent social services, tightening the grip of inequality. **Third, fragile resilience:** when a crisis strikes—pandemic, flood or conflict—already-stretched carers shoulder the burden alone and entire economies begin to buckle.

4.4 Our Charge to the G20

Colleagues, our presidency's banner of *Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability* will be judged by how we treat care. I therefore offer a three-part mandate:

1. **We must invest - thus,** Classify childcare, elder-care and community support as productive infrastructure—funded through national budgets, Just Energy

Transition deals and blended finance, with the same seriousness we reserve for roads and power lines.

2. **We must measure - thus**, Embed regular time-use surveys and satellite accounts that record unpaid care hours. What we count, we can budget for.
3. **We must redistribute – thus**, Enact gender-responsive laws that provide universal parental leave, living wages for care workers, tax incentives for firms that run on-site crèches, and public campaigns that normalise men's share of care.

5 | CLOSING

Colleagues, we leave Skukuza with a straightforward mandate: **turn today's consensus into policy options, costed programmes, and clear timelines before we meet again**. The proposals we draft now will move into the Ministerial Declaration process and through the finance and labour tracks on their way to our Heads of State.

Our work will be measured by practical outcomes:

- a woman whose unpaid care burden is lighter;
- a girl who stays in school because a community crèche opened;
- a survivor who receives timely support and justice.

These are the tests that matter. Let us keep them front-of-mind as we refine our commitments in the weeks ahead.

Thank you for your focus and partnership. I look forward to reconvening with tangible progress in hand.