



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

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR
WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AT THE OCCASION OF THE G20
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND DISABILITY INCLUSION AT THE BANKING SECTOR
BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE**

THEME: Advancing Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment for Women

- **Programme Director: Ms Kgomo Tolamo from National Treasury,**
- **Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities: Ms Mapaseka Steve Letsike**
- **Director General of the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities: Advocate Mikateko Maluleke,**
- **Head of the UN Women Resident Office: Ms Aleta Miller,**
- **Chief Executive Officer of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA): Ms Boitumelo Mosako,**
- **Head of Delegation and Leadership of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA),**
- **Executive Leadership and Delegation of the various Banking and Financial Institutions,**
- **Leaders in Government, Business, and Civil Society,**
- **Distinguished Facilitators and Panellists,**
- **Honourable Guests,**

- **Members of the media,**
 - **Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning.**
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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

I am Sindisiwe Chikunga (MP), and I serve as the Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. I wish to begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to each and every one of you for taking the time to join, participate in, and contribute this timely and transformative G20 Breakfast Roundtable on Empowerment of Women and Disability Inclusion in Banking.

Under the leadership of South Africa's G20 Presidency, from 1 December 2024 to 30 November 2025, our department chairs the Working Group on the Empowerment of Women. 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.

South Africa and the rest of the African Continent, we are presented not only with an opportunity but a profound responsibility to shape our global, regional, and domestic agenda in a way that places women, youth, and persons with disabilities at the very centre of socio-economic recovery and transformation.

LOCATING THE BANKING FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTOR AT THE CENTRE OF OUR WORKING GROUP PRIORITIES

Programme Director, Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's roundtable conversations seek to foster inclusivity by engaging the banking and financial sector, along with corporate stakeholders, in G20-related discussions that have direct implications for South Africa during and beyond its G20 presidency. The platform offers an opportunity to amplify the voices and urgency of sectors that are not directly represented in the G20 Working Groups, ensuring that their contributions in national and global processes.

G20 EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND DISABILITY INCLUSION AT THE BANKING SECTOR BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE

This breakfast meeting seeks to:

- Forge and cultivate *smart partnerships for unlocking inclusive economic participation opportunities*. Sustainable partnerships that extend beyond South Africa's G20 Presidency, thereby bolstering the implementation of G20 commitments.
- **Secondly**, to engage the banking sector to invest in South Africa's G20 initiatives, particularly the work of the Empowerment Working Group and the Disability Inclusion initiative.
- **Thirdly**, to showcase the impact of supporting women's empowerment, gender equality, and disability inclusion in achieving inclusive socio-economic development.

Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment for Women and Persons with Disabilities speaks directly to the heart of our mandate as the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) that is, **to lead on socio-economic transformation and promote the full participation of all in society through mainstreaming, advocacy, monitoring, and accountability.**

THE URGENCY OF INCLUSION

President Ramaphosa's very overarching strategic priorities of **driving inclusive growth and job creation, reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living** and building a capable, ethical and developmental state, are all inextricably linked to a dynamic, growing and transformative financial services sector that is deliberate in investing in the real and productive economy.

Let us be clear: financial inclusion is not a luxury it is a right. It is a critical enabler of economic independence, dignity, and equality. Yet, across the world and particularly here in South Africa, too many women remain excluded from basic financial services without bank accounts, denied access to credit and disconnected from investment opportunities.

This exclusion is even more pronounced for women living with disabilities, rural women, young women and women in the informal employment. If we are to move from rhetoric to reality, from policy to progress, we must be intentional about designing financial systems that serve the underserved and empower the marginalised.

G20 PRIORITIES FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN WORKING GROUP

As the Chair of the G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group (EWWG), South Africa has committed to advancing three urgent priorities:

- **The Care Economy** — recognising and valuing the essential role of care work, both paid and unpaid, in sustaining our societies and enabling women's economic participation.

- **Financial Inclusion for and of Women** — addressing systemic barriers to banking, finance, credit and entrepreneurship.
- **Gender-Based Violence and Femicide** — because without safety and dignity, no true empowerment can occur.

We are also proud to propose the Disability Inclusion Initiative (DII), which aims to ensure full participation and independent living for persons with disabilities by promoting:

- **Access to new technologies and artificial intelligence.**
- **Universal accessibility across public and private sectors.**
- **A human-centred approach to dignity and services in all political and economic agendas.**

I am pleased to share that during the two technical meetings of the working group held to date, these priorities received **overwhelming support** from both G20 member states and our invited guest countries. From these deliberations, key recommendations were developed around critical themes such as **economic decision-making and policy leadership, leveraging preferential public procurement, women's access to land and other productive assets, removing trade barriers that disproportionately impact women in cross-border trade, progressive fiscal reforms, and the long-overdue overhaul of the global financial architecture.**

SHAPING AN INCLUSIVE FINANCIAL FUTURE

Captains of the Banking and Financial Sector,

This roundtable is therefore not just a forum for dialogue; it is a call to action. We must reimagine financial systems that:

- Serve women entrepreneurs, especially those leading micro and small

enterprises;

- Create demand-driven financial products tailored to women's lived realities;
- Incentivise financial institutions to become more inclusive through policy and innovation;
- Invest in digital literacy, infrastructure and access to technology for women and persons with disabilities;
- And most importantly, integrate inclusion into the very architecture of economic planning.

We must also look at the role of care infrastructure not as a social cost but as an economic multiplier. Investment in the care economy is investment in jobs, community wellbeing and women's ability to fully participate in the workforce.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND POLITICAL WILL

Programme Director,

We cannot advance economic empowerment without accountability. The commitments we make here today must translate into measurable action. That is why our department is committed to:

- Monitoring financial inclusion outcomes across sectors;
- Evaluating progress against gender equity benchmarks;
- And holding institutions accountable for delivery on inclusion, equity, and transformation.

South Africa's National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF) also reminds us that economic empowerment must walk hand in hand with bodily autonomy, dignity, and safety.

LEGACY PROJECTS: EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

As part of this working-group, we have developed several empowerment programmes as legacy projects that we wish to partner with private sector partners beyond South Africa's G20 Presidency.

To this end, we have conceptualised and designed a series of Transformative Emerging Industrialists Accelerator Programs and intend to rally all relevant stakeholders, particularly SOEs, private sector companies and industry associations behind their implementation.

These programs will target emerging women industrialists in key sectors, **including energy security, the maritime, defence and aerospace industries, platform economies and agriculture**, among others. Participating emerging industrialists will work alongside experienced industry associations, receiving support **from ideation through to product development, financing, market access, and commercialization pathways.**

To advance Disability Inclusion, we have also developed an investment case for the establishment of a **Disability Inclusion Nerve Centre**, a legacy project of South Africa's Chairship of the G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group. This Centre will serve as a cornerstone for advancing disability rights and inclusion in the region, aligning with both South Africa's constitutional imperatives and international commitments.

The Centre will focus on the following priorities:

- Research on Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly in the areas of Financial Inclusion, Care Economy, Artificial Intelligence, Climate Change and Conducive Working Conditions,

- Establishing a National Disability Data Observatory,
- Strengthening data collection and reporting systems across public and private sectors,
- Developing early childhood disability screening protocols,
- Enhancing institutional capacity through strengthened disability focal points,
- Leveraging AI for Disability Inclusion,
- Supporting special schools across South Africa to train teachers, address the digital divide, and improve educational outcomes for learners with disabilities. Developing a model disability inclusive classroom and school for South Africa.

We stand ready to discuss further the detail of these investment projects and establish progressive long term public private partnerships.

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Programme Director and Distinguished Guests,

We cannot do this alone. Transformation is not the responsibility of one department or one ministry. It is a shared national and global project. It demands leadership from every corner — from banks, from policymakers, from investors, from technology innovators, and from community leaders. Together, we must not only reimagine, but also actively innovate alternative pathways to building an economy that is dynamic, resilient, and inclusive enough to truly leave no one behind.

We must draw a leaf from the Singaporeans, where every single thing is by design. In one of his widely cited speeches, the then Prime Minister Loong reminded us of this principle of deliberate action when he said:

"Singapore is a nation by design. Nothing we have today is natural or happened by itself. Somebody thought about it, made it happen. Not our economic growth, not our international standing, not our multiracial harmony, not even our nationhood. Nothing was by chance." Close quote.

As we begin this important session, I urge you to keep in mind that this is not simply about financial instruments or policy reform, it is about people. About the millions of women whose lives could be transformed if given the right tools, the right access and the right opportunities.

IN CLOSING

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I conclude, together let's discuss how the banking sector can lead by example in building a truly inclusive future. Together, let's explore practical strategies, share success stories, break barriers, challenge stereotypes and fast track the development of financing models that unlock the full economic potential of women and persons with disabilities. Together, let's create a banking environment where everyone can thrive. Above all let us use this platform to ensure that South Africa's G20 leaves an **indelible life changing socioeconomic legacy to women and persons with disabilities form through strategic and sustainable partnerships that ensures that no one is left behind — not by design nor by neglect.**

I thank you.