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CONFERENCE THEME: BUILDING STRONG KINGDOM WOMEN

TOPIC: CHRISTIAN WOMEN IN POLITICS

BY

**DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE DEPARTMENT FOR WOMEN,
YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: IN THE
PRESIDENCY: PROF HLENGIWE MKHIZE**

13 August 2020

Our Host Pastor and Business Woman: Pastor Thoko Vilakazi and
Jerry Vilakazi

IDC Chaiperson: Ms Busi Mabuza

Chaiperson of Bunengi Group: Ms Savanah Maziya

General Practitioner: Pastor and MD of Mediwell Dainfern, Dr
Malebo Mokotedi –Mapiloko

Moderator: Radio and TV Personality; Ms Rorisang Thandekiso

Firstly, allow me to congratulate my dear brother Pastor Jerry Vilakazi his wife Pastor Thoko Vilakazi and the organizing team for putting together such a powerful panel. Of course they all happen to be women, and we are proud of you and we honour you ladies. Your names are an inspiration to many young women who might be struggling at the corporate ladder aspiring to take the first step up or to a young entrepreneur who keeps on rising and falling.

I have been asked to talk to the participants about women in politics and the challenges they face, especially as Christians. What I have learned over years is that women tend to face a common elephant in the room, which is patriarchal mind sets, beliefs and attitudes in a male dominated society we have created over decades.

Although in democracy the challenges women face are subtle and wrapped with a platinum paper, the impact is the same, marginalization sometimes discrimination, not being taken seriously or just being ignored. In that storm, you either choose to be a women of character, remain principled and ethical or you become desperate and want to forge ahead at all costs.

In politics women learned over years to mobilize and use women power to make demands. For instance we often use August month to take stock and re-strategize as to how best to tackle outstanding challenges.

Women who holds ministerial positions are judged by how they have improved the quality of life of the poorest of the poor. I must say upfront that although we all tend to keep to our lanes and work in a fragmented and uncoordinated way , Covid19 has brought to the fore the inequality fault lines , which pose a challenge to all of us . We have seen high levels of youth unemployment, abject poverty and inequities in society.

These compounding challenges have dire consequences on the socio-economic wellbeing of our vulnerable groups. This can be seen through their lived experiences whereby:

- At an individual level, women generally are more likely to be jobless and to earn less than men.
- In the poorest 40% of households, well over half of all families said they were headed by women.
- “Women-headed” households are more likely to be headed by pensioners, because women often outlive their partners.
- Ownership and control of large-scale business remains disproportionately white, although representation improved after 1994.
- In 2017, a sample of 306 listed companies domiciled in South Africa (out of a total of 375 listed on the JSE) had almost 4000 directors. Of that total, 56% were white men and just 15% black women. Almost four out of five listed chief executives were white men, compared to half of non-executive directors. Just 2% of chief executives of the listed companies were black women.

As part of the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action , and in driving the goals of the UN Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development comprising of 17 Sustainable Development Goals towards achieving women 's empowerment and gender equality , the UN WOMEN has initiated a global campaign called Generation Equality .

South Africa has joined Generation Equality, a global campaign to achieve gender equality by 2030. As part of this campaign, we are part of two Action Coalitions, **one on economic justice and rights and another on gender-based violence and femicide**. These Action Coalitions **mobilise governments, civil society and the private sector for collective action**. They give us an opportunity to work with leaders to achieve real change in the lives of women.

The vision of UN Women is that the Generational Equality Campaign should bring together the next generation of women's rights activists to work side by side with the gender equality activists who were instrumental in creating the Beijing Platform for Action more than two decades ago. South Africa will be leading the Action Coalition globally on the thematic area: Economic Justice and Rights.

On the 9th of August 2020 ,when our the President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, addressed the nation, on Women's day, he made a clarion call that we need a collective action by government, civil society, private sector and all actors for meaningful change .Some of the bold actions which South Africa is going to take are:

Action 1. To expand access of women to **economic opportunities**. He said we will do this, among other things, by setting aside **40% of public procurement** for women-owned businesses. We now expect national departments to monitor and report on how many women have participated in each public procurement process.

Government departments must develop clear plans on how they broaden women's participation over the next 12 months.

As Chair of the African Union, the President said, we will also be working on policy guidelines to help member states, on our continent, develop similar interventions that is another opportunity for women in business to access markets within the continent.

Action 2. To support women who operate small or micro businesses, including in the informal sector. Lack of access to financial services and digital identification limits their ability to conduct business.

We will engage the financial sector to strengthen efforts to make financial services accessible and affordable for women.

Under Generation Equality, we will be supporting AU member states in their drive to adopt **digital IDs**.

Action 3. To speed up the process of giving women access to **productive assets such as land**. We will ensure that our own land reform process favours all historically disadvantaged people - including women - in getting land and the means to farm it.

Of the R75 million in COVID-19 relief earmarked for farming input vouchers, 53% of the beneficiaries will be rural women.

We must ensure that women subsistence and small-scale farmers continue to receive support.

At the same time, we will be calling on AU member states to put policies in place to increase women's ownership of land to 30%.

Action 4. To ensure that women are safe from gender-based violence in the workplace. Through Generation Equality, we will work at a national and regional levels towards the ratification of the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the Workplace.

The urgency of achieving gender equality has never been greater than now.

To support the fight against gender-based violence, the Solidarity Fund has approved a R17 million project to expand sheltering services and support the network of Thuthuzela Care Centres. There has been a call for all us to support the Solidarity Fund

A portion of this funding will also go towards capacitating the GBV Command Centre.

In conclusion, the current shape and form of our society and its economic structure must change to better deliver on the promises of equitable wealth re-distribution. An inclusive complementary system that effectively and proactively responds to the aspirations of our people should become what we know as the new-norm.

Without a shadow of doubt, our people more than ever must become progressively self-sufficient, we must therefore industrialise to grow current and new nodal points for our townships and rural economies, firmly placing women at the centre of the country's national developmental agenda.

We should all be creative and energized by the focus of the 6th administration of economic growth and cease the moment

I THANK YOU