



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

**INTERVENTION DELIVERED BY
THE HON. SINDISIWE LYDIA CHIKUNGA, MP
MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY
FOR WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**TO THE
BRICS MINISTERIAL MEETING
FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS**

Kochi, Kerala, India

8 July 2026

Hon. Ms Annpurna Devi, Honourable Minister of Women and Child Development, Government of India;

Honourable Ministers from our BRICS Member States;

Government Officials from all the BRICS Member Countries;

Distinguished Guests,

Madam Moderator, I extend warm and heartfelt greetings on behalf of **His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa**, and the people of South Africa. I also wish to apologise that we were unable to join you physically.

I commend you, Hon. Annpurna Devi, for taking the **BRICS Ministerial Meeting for Women's Affairs** under your stewardship. This forum was initiated within BRICS in 2023, under the Chairship of South Africa — and it is encouraging to see it grow from strength to strength under each successive Chair.

Through the leadership of India, we believe this platform will help us advance joint initiatives on **women-led development** — recognising women as leaders, entrepreneurs, innovators, and drivers of sustainable change across our economies.

The four priorities before us are deeply interconnected. Governance and leadership strengthen inclusive decision-making. Financial and digital inclusion open access to markets and opportunity. Entrepreneurship and skills expand women's economic agency. And climate action, food security, and nutrition recognise women's role in resilience and community wellbeing. **Our shared task is to ensure that women's empowerment is not treated as a narrow social policy issue — but as a central developmental imperative.**

South Africa's Interventions Across the Four Priority Areas

Chairperson, allow me to place before this Meeting one intervention that South Africa is pursuing in each of the four priority areas.

On **Governance and Leadership**, South Africa is finalising a **Women's Economic Assembly (WECONA)** framework, anchored on Section 9 of our Constitution — moving women from consultative participation to real representation on procurement panels, on state-owned enterprise boards, and in decision-making across the public and private sector.

On **Digital and Financial Inclusion**, we are advancing a **Cooperative Banking Institution Initiative** to close the **US\$1.7 trillion global financing gap** facing women entrepreneurs — building a women-owned, women-controlled banking architecture that addresses collateral barriers, product design failures, and gender bias in lending. Alongside this, our social development system delivers direct income support to women through the **Child Support Grant**, which reaches **more than 13 million children each month** — the vast majority of grants being received by women as primary caregivers. Together with the **Older Persons Grant**, the **Disability Grant**, and the **Social Relief of Distress Grant**, this is the foundation on which the financial inclusion of poor women in our country is being built.

On **Entrepreneurship and Skills**, South Africa is operationalising the **7% public procurement set-aside** for businesses owned by women, youth, and persons with disabilities under the **Public Procurement Act, 28 of 2024** — supported by enterprise incubation, skills development, and market access through the **Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDFA)** and the **dtic Transformation Fund**. Together, these

represent one of the most ambitious set-aside regimes on the African continent.

On **Climate, Food, and Nutrition**, our Cabinet has adopted the **Climate Change and Disability Impact Report**, and we are integrating gender-responsive measures into our climate adaptation, disaster response, and food security architecture — placing women farmers, women small-scale food producers, and women in the informal food economy at the centre of the response. **The women of South Africa carry the burden of climate-driven food insecurity — and they must therefore be at the centre of the solution.**

In Closing

Chairperson, across BRICS, women are not only affected by developmental challenges — **we are central to solving them.** South Africa stands ready to work with India, and with all BRICS Member States, to convert these commitments into measurable progress in the lives of women across our economies.

I thank you.