



**MINISTRY IN THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR
WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, HON. MS
SINDISIWE CHIKUNGA – MP**

**SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE MEMORANDUM OF
UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN,
YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND METROPOLITAN
LIFE**

***08 SEPTEMBER 2026 / METROPOLITAN LIFE – OFFICE 129, RIVONIA
ROAD, SANDTON / JOHANNESBURG / SOUTH AFRICA
@14H30***

SALUTATION

- **Programme Director, Acting Deputy Director-General: Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Coordination - Mr Dire Segatlhe**
- **Acting Director-General of the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Dr Praveena Sukhraj-Ely;**
- **Chief Executive Officer of Metropolitan Life - Mr Peter Tshiguvho;**
- **Special Advisor to the Minister – Dr Mukovhe Masutha**
- **Ministerial Special Envoy – Ms Pinky Harawa**
- **Managing Executive: Sales and Distribution at Metropolitan Life - Ms Reabetswe Mosala;**
- **Head: Stakeholder Relationship Management - Mr Koketso Ntsoane,**
- **Market Development Manager - Mr Cebisa Mahlukwana**
- **Mr Mbhazima Shivhiti, Chief Director: Corporate Management**
- **Senior Executives and Leadership of both DWYPD and Metropolitan Life;**
- **Officials of the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities;**
- **Distinguished Guests;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Good afternoon.

Programme Director,

Before I proceed, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to Metropolitan Life, and particularly the Chief Executive Officer, Mr Peter Tshiguvho, for extending this opportunity for partnership and collaboration. It is a privilege to join you today as we formalise a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities and Metropolitan Life. This agreement reflects a shared commitment to investing in people, strengthening institutions and advancing inclusive development.

CEO, this year carries historical significance. South Africa commemorates the 70th Anniversary of the historic Women's March of 1956 (Platinum Jubilee). We do so under the powerful theme, **"Empowered Women Empower Nations."** This theme reminds us that the progress of any nation is inseparable from the progress of its women.

This year also marks fifty years since the 1976 Youth Uprisings, for the Golden Jubilee our theme is RESET@50 The Future Calls. Equally, 2026 it is thirty years of our Constitution. Both the Platinum and the Golden Jubilees are year-long commemoration programmes.

Today's ceremony is also a significant milestone. As it affirms our shared belief that sustainable development is best achieved when government and the private sector work together to create opportunities, improve lives and build a society that leaves no one behind.

As the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, our mandate is to advance equality, empowerment, inclusion and socio-economic transformation. We work to ensure that women, youth and persons with disabilities are not only represented in society but are active participants in economic growth and national development.

At the same time, we recognise that the success of our mandate depends on the wellbeing of the people who carry it forward every day.

Employee wellness is therefore not a peripheral matter. It is a strategic imperative. **Institutions can only perform at their best when their employees are healthy, motivated, financially resilient and supported.**

In today's evolving world of work, **employees face increasing pressures arising from financial challenges, health concerns, family responsibilities and emotional stress.** Within our department, these pressures are often intensified by the difficult social realities that our officials engage with daily,

including poverty, inequality, exclusion and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide.

This Memorandum of Understanding provides a **practical framework through which the Department and Metropolitan Life will collaborate to strengthen employee wellness, promote financial literacy, support personal development and cultivate a healthy workplace culture.** Through awareness programmes, financial education, wellness interventions and advisory support, this partnership will contribute to building a more resilient and productive workforce.

We particularly welcome the focus on financial empowerment. Financial wellbeing is increasingly recognised as a key component of overall wellness. Equipping employees with the knowledge and tools to make informed financial decisions strengthens not only individual households but also organisational performance and social stability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While employee wellness remains central to this partnership, we also see an opportunity to extend our collaboration towards broader developmental priorities.

As South Africa advances its transformation agenda and the priorities highlighted through our G20 engagements, we must

deepen partnerships that can deliver meaningful outcomes for women, youth and persons with disabilities.

We therefore see Metropolitan Life not only as a wellness partner, but as a strategic development partner.

We look forward to exploring collaboration in areas such as:

- **Women's Economic Justice and Empowerment**, including financial inclusion, entrepreneurship and economic participation.
- **Youth Skills Development and Economic Participation**, ensuring young people are equipped for opportunities in the modern economy.
- **Financial Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities**, through accessible services and innovative support mechanisms.
- **The Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide**, through awareness, advocacy and community-based interventions.
- **Recognition of Paid and Unpaid Care Work**, particularly the contribution of women to families, communities and economies.
- **The Establishment of a Disability Nerve Centre**, a flagship initiative aimed at strengthening disability inclusion, data, innovation and coordinated service delivery.

These are merely policy priorities. They are nation-building priorities. They require collaboration, innovation and collective action.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The true value of this partnership will not be measured by the agreement we sign today. It will be measured by the impact we create. It will be measured by the women who gain greater economic independence, the young people who acquire skills and opportunities, persons with disabilities who experience greater inclusion and access, employees whose wellbeing is strengthened. And most importantly by the contribution we make towards building a more equitable, inclusive and prosperous South Africa.

For this reason, I encourage both institutions to develop **an annual programme of flagship initiatives** supported by **clear implementation plans, measurable targets and regular review mechanisms**. In doing so, we will ensure that **this Memorandum becomes a living instrument of change and not merely a statement of intent**.

Let us build a partnership that delivers tangible results.

A partnership that translates commitments into action whose impact extends beyond our institutions and reaches the communities we are called upon to serve.

CONCLUSION

In closing, allow me once again to thank Metropolitan Life for embracing this partnership with vision and purpose. We look **forward to working together to advance wellness, empowerment**, inclusion and economic opportunity for the benefit of our employees and the people of South Africa.

Together, let us **build stronger institutions, expand opportunity and advance dignity and inclusion. And ensure that no woman, no young person and no person with a disability is left behind.**

I thank you.