



MINISTRY
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, MMAMOLOKO KUBAYI, COSATU INAUGURAL GENDER CONFERENCE, TSHWANE, 20 JUNE 2022

Programme Director

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our basic premise is that our democracy is only sustainable when all of us live in a just and free society. We all know that this conference has been occasioned by the fact that, there remains in our society, a gender imbalance that cannot go unchallenged. Women are still victims of the triple challenges of class, gender and race. Nowhere else is this gender imbalance more apparent than in the economic sphere. It is an indictment on all of us that women are still largely doing unpaid work. It is an indictment on the democratic government that the face of poverty in South Africa remains a black woman.

Given this reality, what is it that we need to do to ensure that the status of women in the economy tomorrow is better than what it is today?

What is it that we are doing as women leaders that shows that we are acutely sensitive to the unique challenges faced by women in mainstream economic activities?

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey of the second quarter of 2021, published by Statistics South Africa, the South African labour market is more favourable to men than it is to women. The survey further revealed that men are more likely to be in paid employment than women regardless of race, while women are more likely than men to be doing unpaid work. In the same quarter, the rate of unemployment amongst women was 36,8% compared to 32,4% amongst men. The unemployment rate amongst black African women was 41,0% during this period

compared to 8,2% amongst white women, 22,4% amongst Indian/Asian women and 29,9% amongst coloured women. This means that in addition to the gender discrimination, racial discrimination is still a heavy burden to women in the world of work.

Research also indicates that working class LGBTQ+ women are faced with quadruple oppression that of class, gender, race and sexual orientation. Once again, we are reminded that the odds are heavily stacked against women in the economy.

This discrimination of women at all levels and sectors of the economy is a running thread that has to be broken. Fortunately, the union movement has always been ahead of the curve in recognizing the important role that women play in the economy and in society broadly. It is the worker's movement that has largely civilised the world to understand that women are just as capable in the workplace and any other sphere of the economy, as men are. By hosting this conference, you are once again demonstrating that you are the primary motive force for creating a just and free society. I will be looking forward to the outcomes of this conference because they help us to advance gender struggles in our work.

Our country has some of the most progressive laws in the world, including full constitutional protections against gender discrimination. However, there is a gap between the lived reality and what is promised in the legal framework. Our struggle to create a just and free society has to be focused on closing this gap.

Closing the gap has to include economic participation without which the emancipation of women will remain but a dream. It is in this context that the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) which was developed with the participation of all social partners, including labour, emphasized the notion of reconstruction as a way of making the economy more inclusive. It was agreed amongst all role players that as the economy recovers from the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic, it should be reconstructed in a manner that is more inclusive of all the vulnerable, which includes the youth, women and LGBTQ+ community.

The corroding malfeasance that took root in the past decade and continues to weigh heavily on our efforts to rebuild and recover our economy must be defeated. It is now more than ever that the social partners must find one another to forge a

comprehensive social compact that will underpin the collective efforts to rebuild our economy.

The new consensus amongst government, business, labour and civil society for building an inclusive and sustainable economy has to incorporate gender mainstreaming.

In this regard, the Mass Public Employment Programme which is an integral part of job creation and protection has to be strengthened to make our recovery more inclusive, especially for women. It is for this reason that the government has expanded the Public and Social Employment Programme for direct beneficiaries to rise from 850 000 to over one million South Africans. So far, more than 80% of participants were young people, and over 60% were women.

To increase the pace of empowerment of women entrepreneurs, the Department of Human Settlements has approved a procurement framework on its grants to include 40% set aside for Women, above 15% for Youth; 5% for Military Veterans; and 5 % for people with disabilities. More broadly, women participation in all aspects of the recovery has to be increased so that we can also increase the share of women employed in the formal sector from the current level of just over 40%.

The speed with which we improve the economic fortunes of the previously disadvantaged will also determine the pace in which we can implement spatial transformation. This is because the creation of decent and sustainable human settlements is inextricably linked to access to sustainable economic opportunities.

In the Department of Human Settlements, the demand for housing includes BNG (Breaking New Ground formerly known as RDP), which is mainly for indigent households and social housing which is mainly the missing middle or those who cannot get a bond in a bank but they do not qualify for BNG houses. With poor economic performance, the demand for BNG rises very fast. What is desirable is for the demand for social housing to increase so that money from the fiscus spent on housing can be reduced or redirected to other social protection programmes.

The Department will be changing the Norms and Standards in relation to the creation of sustainable human settlements to make these settlements more inclusive by

improving access and affordability. In this regard, the human settlements of the future will include GBV centres that will cater for victims of gender-based violence.

In this financial year, a revised Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Programme - 'Help Me Buy A Home' - has come into effect. The revision comes into force after an extensive consultation process with Provinces, Municipalities and other Non-State Stakeholders. A key aspect will be the ability of households to access the programme within a set of non-mortgage finance instruments. In addition, the programme allows for the funding of households who hold "Permission-To-Occupy" certificates. This is particularly important in relation to the extension of credit and funding to households in rural areas. The ability of households to improve and upgrade homes and properties has a number of socio-economic benefits, including promoting development and asset accumulation and equality.

The revised Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Programme (FLISP) now caters for households that earn from R3 500 to R22 000 per month. The enhancement also includes the alignment of the FLISP with the Government Employees Housing Scheme (GEHS).

In an effort to facilitate access the ownership amongst government employees by utilising the Help Me Buy a Home Subsidy as an instrument, the NHFC has signed an MoU with GEHS. The MoU will enable qualifying government employees to access FLISP subsidies. The programme will undoubtedly strengthen the contribution towards leveraging increased home loans to government employees, as part of the government's mandate of providing quality and affordable housing to low and middle-income households in South Africa.

The Department of Human Settlements has been at pains in responding to issues that are raised by the Chapter 9 institutions (SAHRC and CGE) regarding the issue of special housing needs and gender-based violence. Women have been affected by this scourge without a solution.

We are refocusing our policies to ensure that there is provision for the vulnerable groups of the society and some form of special housing need and or a second level housing. Of importance is the fact that the policy and guidelines for housing assistance to households faced with special housing needs due to gender based violence, HIV/Aids, orphans, vulnerable children and persons with intellectual and psycho-social

disabilities has been formulated and will be approved by all the relevant stakeholders in the coming weeks.

This policy when approved will assist by providing shelter to the vulnerable groups, including the victims of gender-based violence and enable them to begin to live meaningful lives that would be free of abuse. To address the issue of dead assets that have been created by lack of suitable institutional arrangement, the Department will be setting up transactional support centres to monitor and also assist in enforcing the sale restrictions clauses.

Our eradication and management of the title deeds backlog is a matter which will receive priority and maximum energy. Our failure to do so robs our citizens of the ability to achieve a long-held cry for security of tenure. The fact that we are unable to eradicate this backlog results in millions of women, children and vulnerable persons being at the mercy of unscrupulous spouses, family members and predatory behaviour in the property sector.

Lack of security of tenure is also the main reason why women are unable to access finance to send their children to school and start and grow their small businesses. This is much more common in the informal sector which is dominated by women, especially rural women. The informal sector and rural women is an area that we are going to focus on so that our women empowerment can have more meaning.

Collectively, these efforts will go a long way towards ensuring that there is affordability and access to Decent Human Settlements for vulnerable sectors of our society.

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action outlined a set of actions that the government and other societal stakeholder need to prioritise to achieve gender equality. These include access to decent work and closing the gender pay gap; rebalancing of the care workload; ending violence against women; reducing maternal mortality and realizing sexual and reproductive health and rights; and participation in power and decision-making at all levels.

The actions it outlines are comprehensive and very practical for tackling every aspect of gender inequality. I will just highlight a few set of Actions that I believe are relevant in our country though not exhaustive. Amongst others these include:

On the economy:

- (I) Restructuring and targeting the allocation of public expenditures to promote women's economic opportunities and equal access to productive resources and to address the basic social, educational and health needs of women, particularly those living in poverty;
- (II) Establishing mechanisms and other forums to enable women entrepreneurs and women workers to contribute to the formulation of policies and programmes being developed by economic ministries and financial institutions;

On access to finance:

- (III) Encouraging links between financial institutions and non-governmental organizations and support innovative lending practices, including those that integrate credit with women's services and training and provide credit facilities to rural women.
- (IV) Mobilizing the banking sector to increase lending and refinancing through incentives and the development of intermediaries that serve the needs of women entrepreneurs and producers in both rural and urban areas, and include women in their leadership, planning and decision-making;

On closing the pay gap and equitable work environment:

- (V) Promoting gender-sensitive policies and measures to empower women as equal partners with men in technical, managerial and entrepreneurial fields and equal pay for work of equal value;
- (VI) Adjusting employment policies to facilitate the restructuring of work patterns in order to promote the sharing of family responsibilities;

On fighting poverty:

- (VII) Enabling women to obtain affordable housing and access to land by, amongst other things, removing all obstacles to access, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of women, especially those living in poverty and female heads of household;

On gender based violence:

- (VIII) Exercising due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons;
- (IX) Creating or strengthening institutional mechanisms so that women and girls can report acts of violence against them in a safe and confidential environment, free from the fear of penalties or retaliation, and file charges;

I am confident that in your deliberations during this important conference you will help us to find the most effective ways in which we can implement these actions, so that we can deal decisively with gender inequality.

From the foregoing, it is clear that gender discrimination has many layers and after each victory women have to embark on a new battle. But we dare not allow fatigue to set in. We dare not fail. Victory is certain, there shall be equality, justice and freedom for all.

I thank you