



MINISTRY

**HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

THEMBI SIMELANE, MP

MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE YOUNG WOMEN OF AFRICA

MILES FOR CHANGE SUMMIT

15 NOVEMBER 2025

HELD AT PROTEA HOTEL LANDMARK

POLOKWANE, LIMPOPO

Programme Director,

Leadership of Young Women of Africa

The constituency of YWOA

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

Good day,

I am honoured and privileged to deliver the keynote address at this important Miles for Change Summit convened under the overarching theme: **“Ending GBVF One Step at a Time Raising Awareness, Restoring Dignity, and Empowering Survivors Through Collective Action”**. Allow me to commend the leadership of the Young Women of Africa (YWOA) for organising this summit for its unwavering commitment to advancing a critical global transformation agenda.

This theme is a call to action, one that mandates government, the private sector, and civil society to unite in providing practical solutions, raising awareness, educating our communities about the root cause, impacts and prevention of the devastating scourge of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF).

I salute your bravery, tenacity, and willingness to organise and mobilise yourselves to confront GBVF head-on.

Programme Director,

The Summit is timely as it takes place a few days before the G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg, which South Africa will proudly host.

As we prepare for this gathering of Heads of State, our Department, the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD), has hosted several Technical and Ministerial Empowerment of Women Working Group (EWWG) under the W20 umbrella.

These engagements provided strategic platforms for meaningful discussions on women's issues in the build-up to the G20 Summit. South Africa assumed the G20 Presidency on 01 December 2024, leading up to November 2025, just five years before the United Nations Agenda 2030.

The W20, the G20's official engagement group dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment, celebrates its 10th anniversary this year.

Last month I addressed a W20 Summit in Johannesburg, and I indicated that, as the only African country that is a permanent member of the G20, South Africa carries a unique and special responsibility. We are the fourth in a powerful cycle of Global South presidencies, following Indonesia, India, and Brazil. This moment offers us the opportunity to bring the African Agenda, together with the priorities of the Global South, into the heart of global governance.

I further stated that we strongly support the W20's call to treat violence against women and girls (VAWG) as a public health emergency. VAWG must be treated as a public health emergency.

The W20 strongly urged G20 Leaders to act on areas such as investing in protection, care, support, and healing systems and services for women and child survivors of violence: Significant increase in funding for safe shelters, trauma-informed counselling, legal aid, and comprehensive trauma sensitive healthcare, including in cities, rural, marginalised, and underserved areas.

Formally recognise online and digital forms of VAWG as crimes by criminalising cyberstalking, image-based abuse (including deep fakes), online harassment, and enforce existing laws. National legal frameworks must be aligned to prevent jurisdictional loopholes that allow perpetrators to evade accountability across borders.

South Africa continues to implement the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, strengthen legal frameworks, and promote women's leadership in peacebuilding and humanitarian response, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the African Union Protocol on Women's Rights.

The President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, has declared Gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) our second pandemic. Subsequently government has made significant strides in fighting the end of GBVF.

The National Strategic Plan on GBVF was launched in 2020 by government, with an aim to tackle the abuse against women and children. Since its establishment, the following interventions have been made.

- Extensive legal reform
- Support for survivors through the provision of evidence kits at police stations

- Psychological and social services
- The establishment of a GBVF Response Fund
- Support for Thuthuzela and Khuseleka Care Centres, which provide vital services for GBV survivors

These efforts reflect our commitment to ensuring accountability at both institutional and operational levels. We have embedded gender mainstreaming within our governance architecture to ensure that women's empowerment is central to our national development agenda.

According to Stats SA, over 40% of households in our country are headed by women. In response, our Department, the Department of Human Settlements has made deliberate policy choices to prioritise women's economic empowerment.

The Department of Human Settlements plays a pivotal role in driving women's economic empowerment within the sector. Through our policy framework, we have set aside 40% of our expenditure amounting to R11 billion for women-owned businesses. This commitment ensures that women are prioritized and benefit meaningfully from our grant spending.

Notably, Limpopo Province, where we are today, has emerged as one of the top-performing provinces in fully utilizing this allocation and prioritizing women contractors. I commend the MEC for CoGHSTA, Basikopo Makamu, for his leadership in ensuring that women are not left behind in delivering sustainable human settlements.

Projects led by women contractors consistently stand out and they are completed on time, and when we hand over BNG/RDP houses built by them, many go the extra mile by furnishing homes for indigent beneficiaries. This is true ***ubuntu*** in action and a testament to the fact that women are nation builders. Indeed, when you empower a woman, you empower a nation.

We also have the National Special Housing Needs Policy and Programme, which is designed to:

- Provide housing for people with special needs who cannot live independently.
- Offer a safe, supportive, and protected living environment whether on a permanent or temporary basis.
- Assist individuals who have low or no income and rely on social grants.

I highlight this policy because it specifically caters to GBVF (Gender-Based Violence and Femicide) victims, ensuring that, based on their income, they can access permanent, safe, and secure shelter in the form of a BNG/RDP house.

Programme Director,

Through our Social Housing Programme which provides affordable rental accommodation for the low-income market, primarily those earning between R1,850 and R22,000 per month we have observed that most occupants are women. This is largely because these projects offer enhanced security, including 24/7 protection and child-friendly play facilities, creating a safe and supportive environment for families.

We will await in anticipation the resolutions of this Summit as the Department of Human Settlements to reflect on their centrality on issues relative to our mandate as a department and accordingly enhance our policies to be more coherently responsive to victims of gender-based violence and femicide.

I must agree with the conceptualisation of this programme, that we must move from slogan, reaction and implement grassroots-based strategies to end Gender Based Violence against women and children.

The resolutions from this Summit must find expressions at the 16 Days of Activism Campaign launch that will be held in Gauteng Province (Gallagher Estate) on the 25th of November 2025.

As I conclude, I wish to remind ourselves that women in our villages, townships and urban areas continue to bear the brunt of poverty, femicide, economic exclusion, and many other social ills. Women are the primary victims of these challenges.

Programme Director,

We unequivocally stand with **#WomenForChange** campaign in amplifying the voices in the fight against Gender Based Violence and Femicide, and it is for this reason why we have been changing our social media profiles en masse to purple to appeal to societal outrage over the incredible rising violence against women and girls.

United, we have the power and means to change the situation around and as a woman standing in front of you today, I dare say – **WE SHALL NOT FAIL.**

I thank you.