



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Address by President Jacob Zuma on the occasion of the celebration of
National Women's Day,**

King Zwelithini Stadium, Umlazi, Durban

9 August 2014

The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Senzo Mchunu,

The Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Ms Susan Shabangu,

The Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr Nathi Mthethwa,

The Minister of Basic Education Ms Angie Motshekga,

All Ministers, Deputy Ministers, MECs, MPs and MPLs

Mayor of Ethekewini Municipality Councillor James Nxumalo,

Leaders of women's organisations present,

Mphakathi waseThekwini namaphethelo,

Fellow South Africans,

Malibongwe!

Siyanibingelela nonke kulomcimbi obaluleke kangaka wokugubha iqhaza elabanjwa
abantu besifazane emzabalazweni ezweni lakithi.

Compatriots,

In some societies, it is said that when a woman dies, so does the family.

This statement points to the central role that women play in all societies.

In South Africa, women have for decades, played a critical role in the struggle for liberation. They have also contributed immensely in the process of building a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa.

It is not surprising therefore that there is a day dedicated to women in the country's calendar, the 9th of August.

Women earned this day, based on that historic anti-pass march by around 20 000 women to the seat of government, the Union Buildings in Pretoria. They made their presence felt against discriminatory and racist laws.

At the first celebration of National Women's Day on the 9th of August 1995, the Founding President of our democracy, Dr Nelson Mandela explained the importance of this day as follows:

"This is in celebration of the struggles of the women over the decades and a rejuvenation of our commitment to strive for a society free of all kinds of discrimination, more especially discrimination against women."

Accordingly, this is an important day in the national calendar. It is not an ordinary public holiday.

The 2014 Women's Month takes place against the backdrop of a number of significant milestones.

- It is 60 years since the signing of the Women's Charter on 17 April 1954 in Johannesburg.
- It is 20 years since the adoption of the 1994 Women's Charter for Effective Equality.

- The country is celebrating 20 Years of Freedom.
- In two years' time we will celebrate 60 years since the historic 1956 Women's March to the Union Buildings.

The 1954 Women's Charter preceded the Freedom Charter, signaling the importance accorded to women's rights in our country that early on.

Significantly, the Women's Charter influenced the content and spirit of the 1994 Women's Charter for Effective Equality and also the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996.

We have made important strides in realising the vision of the Women's Charter since the dawn of freedom.

There are just 508 days before the deadline set by the United Nations for all countries to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Goal three of the MDGs is: *promoting gender equality and empowering women*.

South Africa has made visible progress in this regard, judging by the number of women holding public office and women who have entered fields that had been earmarked for men only in the past.

Women representation in the National Assembly moved from a mere 2.7% before 1994 to the current 41% women.

We are also moving closer to our target of having more women in Cabinet and the National Executive as a whole. We have 20 men and 15 women Ministers as well as 20 men and 17 women Deputy Ministers as of May this year.

The judiciary had two white women in 1994, now there are 61 women judges of which 48 are black women. This constitutes about 30% of the judiciary.

The country has pilots and women in senior positions in the military and the police. We have women construction workers building roads and dams in the government's Expanded Public Works programmes and Community Work programmes.

There are women bus and train drivers, and leading women entrepreneurs including a woman who owns a mine, Ms Daphne Mashile-Nkosi.

Granted, there is still a long way to go towards full participation by women, but the trend is in the right direction. It is towards opening up the space for women and they are proving their capabilities.

To further advance progress, we have decided to sharpen the law governing equality in the workplace. The passing of the Employment Equity Act, 16 years ago and now the promulgation of the Employment Equity Amendment Act on 1 August 2014, marked a turning point in our history in terms of opening up opportunities.

We had to amend the Employment Equity Act because in spite of all the efforts, remnants of unfair discrimination still persist in the labour market.

Women at work still experience discriminatory practices based on gender such as pay inequalities, sexual harassment and practices such as discrimination against pregnant women workers.

One of the key achievements for women through the Employment Equity Act amendment is the new provision calling for *equal pay for work of equal value*. Unequal pay based on gender and other listed grounds in the Constitution and the Act, is unfair discrimination, and is illegal.

Another achievement is that the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), has now been given more power to not only resolve unfair discrimination matters, but to arbitrate on them as well. This is a gain for workers, in particular women.

Another positive development in this law is that all sexual harassment cases, irrespective of the level of pay, can now also be lodged with the CCMA for arbitration.

This will facilitate access to justice and at the same time, lessen the financial burden of legal cost of taking cases to the Labour Court.

The progressive government has introduced this law, because in our view, employment equity is not only a moral and human rights imperative.

It is a pre-condition for the achievement of sustainable development, economic growth and equality in the country, which is in line with the National Development Plan.

This law is indeed a step in the right direction as we conclude the first decade of freedom.

Sinxusa omama ukuthi bawusebenzise lomthetho omusha wokulingana emsebenzini we- Employment Equity Act.

Lomthetho ubanika amalungelo okuthi bangaholelwa imali engaphansi kwabesilisa ngomsebenzi ofanayo, ubavikela uma bephathwa kabi ngenxa yokukhulelwa besebenza, nezinye izimo, kanye nokuhlukunyezwa ngokocansi emsebenzini.

Uhulumeni kaKhongolose uzimisele ukwenza impilo yabesifazane emsebenzini ibe ngcono.

Government also continues to support women's participation in the economy as entrepreneurs and also as decision makers.

To promote women's role in decision making in the economy, the Department of Trade and Industry has trained one hundred and seventy two women to date, to equip them with the necessary skills to serve on boards of directors of companies.

This programme was implemented in collaboration with the South African Women Entrepreneurial Network, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women South Africa and the Institute of Directors South Africa.

Government also opens up export opportunities for businesses owned by women. There are many examples of successful initiatives in this regard.

The Department of Trade and Industry, has re-established a permanent showroom in Atlanta in the United States, showcasing Home Décor Lifestyle products from SMMEs and Co-operatives.

The showroom will provide small businesses with a direct and fair entry into the United States market for businesses predominately owned by women.

One of the products displayed at the showroom, Ottomans produced by Ozzy's Eco Decors owned by Ms Yolanda Msutwana from East London, received two special awards from independent assessors during the 2014 July show.

This is a prestigious award conferred to any crafter participating at this show. We congratulate Ms Msutwana for this achievement.

Government also runs the Bavumile Skills Development programme, which prepares women for the export sector, targetting women in rural areas and townships who have already acquired expertise in creative, clothing and textiles.

More than two hundred business women have benefited from the Export Mentorship and Global Export Passport Programmes.

In addition, the department of trade and industry has partnered with the Wholesale and Retail Sectoral Education and Training Authority in a 20 million rand project to uplift 1000 informal traders of which 60% will be women. The project begins this month, in August.

Another key project run by government is the Cooperatives Incentive Scheme. In the past financial year, 990 women benefited from the 62 million rand scheme out of a total of one thousand eight hundred and ninety seven beneficiaries.

These are just a few programmes demonstrating tangible support for women-owned and women-run businesses and cooperatives to promote economic participation.

Government also promotes commercial farming and the active participation of women in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector.

This year's winners of the popular female farmer or entrepreneur of the year competition run by the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries will be announced on the 22 August 2014.

We also look forward to the awards for women in construction and water sectors later this month as well.

Compatriots,

We are doing well in advancing women in business and in the workplace.

However, our responsibility also goes beyond that. We have to provide an improved quality of life for women in informal settlements, rural villages and townships.

For as long as some of them still have to carry buckets of water over long distances and cook with firewood outside their homes because there is no electricity, our work is not yet completed.

Kuningi esesikwenzile njengohulumeni kakhongolose ukushintsha izimpilo zomama.

Kodwa uma kusekhona abangenawo amanzi nogesi, abasapheka emlilweni bathwale amanzi le kude emfuleni noma ngamabhakede, kusho ukuthi umsebenzi wethu awukakapheli.

Sisaqhubekela phambili soze sifike kubobonke abantu baseNingizimu Afrika nezidingo.

Angeke siphumule neze uma kusekhona abangakawatholi amanzi, ugesi nezinye izidingo.

In May this year we established a standalone Department of Water and Sanitation which demonstrates the seriousness with which we take the delivery of these key services.

Sakhe umnyango omusha wezamanzi nokuthuthwa kwendle sawunika umsebenzi obaluleke kakhulu, wokuletha amanzi kubantu bonke, ulethe isithunzi nempilo engcono.

Abanye abantu bayabuza ukuthi kwenziwa yini ukuthi noma behlala eduze kwamadamu amakhulu kodwa kubenzima ukuthola amanzi, njengabantu base Mkhanyakude la, KwaZulu-Natal. Bakhe eduze kwedamu iJozini.

Maduze nje, indawo yaseJozini izothola amanzi. Kuzosizakala abantu abadlulile ku 100 000 kuloluhlelo.

In Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga our people will also have access to water by the end of this year, once the reticulation project currently underway is completed. This is just to mention one or two key water infrastructure projects.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are also making progress in relation to Millennium Development Goal 1, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

We have reduced the numbers of people experiencing the worst levels of income poverty significantly. In fact, we have achieved the MDG target of reducing the number of people living on less than one US dollar a day.

Most of the achievements in reducing extreme levels of income poverty can be ascribed to government's comprehensive social protection programme, which includes the extensive 16 million strong social grants programme, supporting vulnerable children in the main.

Other poverty alleviation programmes benefitting women and children include access to free education and primary health care for the poor and the provision of free basic services to indigent members of our society.

While government provides social grants to alleviate poverty for children in the main, we also expect working parents to continue to take responsibility for their children.

It is for this reason that government, through the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, continues to improve the maintenance payment system.

Uhulumeni uyaqhubeka nokwenza ukukhokhwa kwesondlo sezingane kubelula, ukuze omama bayithole ngokushesha imali uma sebebophe oyise bezingane abangazondli izingane zabo.

Imali yesondlo manje isitholakala ngekhadi kumama ofake icala asisekho isidingo sokuyobamba ulayini enkantolo.

Almost all maintenance courts undertake electronic transfers to beneficiaries which has reduced the turnaround time of payments from a couple of months to 4 days or less.

To date, 98% of the maintenance beneficiaries receive their monthly payments electronically, which is more than 200 thousand beneficiaries.

Two billion rand was paid to maintenance beneficiaries in the past three years by errant parents.

We appeal to parents, especially fathers, to support their children voluntarily without the involvement of government or the courts. They have a responsibility to do so.

Compatriots

The empowerment of women begins with the empowerment of girl children, so that we invest in the future. It is thus impressive that we have achieved high levels of enrolment by girls in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

The attainment of the MDG target on education is significant for a number of reasons. Education is central to development and can serve as a catalyst to address gender disparities.

Moreover, education is the primary vehicle by which vulnerable children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate meaningfully in the economy.

Government runs a programme called *"Keeping Girls in Schools"*, an initiative funded by the Global Fund. Girls are supported with life skills and academically, to ensure that they stay in school until they complete Grade 12.

The legacy we want to leave behind is one of healthy, empowered and educated young women, who will work side-by-side with their male counterparts in building this nation.

In supporting our girls we want them to undertake careers that were previously regarded as being set aside for males. Science and technology support programmes which are run by the Department of Science and Technology prioritise girl children and women.

Government hosts the annual South African Women in Science Awards to encourage, and reward women scientists, and researchers, and to profile them as role models for younger women. The 2014 Women in Science Awards event will take place on Friday, 15 August 2014.

Compatriots,

Noting that women marched against pass laws in 1956, our Department of Home Affairs has done much to improve lives of women, by restoring their identity, dignity and citizenship.

Women now apply for identity documents without requiring the approval and signatures of males, thus allowing for independent participation in the social, economic and political life of the country.

Omame manje sebeyakwazi ukubhalisa amapasi behamba bodwa bezimele, kanti kuqala ngesikhathi sobandlululo kwakuthiwa abalande amadoda, oyise noma abayeni babo, noma izingane zabafana!

Introducing passports for children will also go a long way in protecting women and children. Mothers have to give consent before anyone can travel with their children, which protects children.

Landmark developments also include the registration of children immediately after birth in clinics and hospitals.

Siyabakhumbuza omame ukuthi babhalise izingane uma zizalwa. Uhulumeni usakwenza kwalula lokhu ngoba ziyabhaliswa manje nasezibhedlela emva kokuzalwa.

We have also directed the Department of Home Affairs to work harder to protect South African women from fraudulent marriages that are wreaking havoc in the lives of many.

While we acknowledge with great pride the strides made in the past 20 years towards women empowerment, we also still face high unemployment, poverty and inequality that women still experience.

We also need to continue fighting against the abuse of women and children especially of girl children.

The security cluster in government continues its work of catching and prosecuting perpetrators of violence against women with the support of communities.

South Africa must be safe for women and children, at all times, everywhere.

Compatriots

The other Millennium Development Goal that relates specifically to women that I wish to comment on is MDG 5 which relates to improving maternal health.

The Ministers of Health and Social Development have launched a national contraception and family planning campaign recently, to ensure that women have access to this important health service.

To further expand health care, from January next year all pregnant HIV positive women will be able to access lifelong anti-retroviral drugs. All others living with HIV will be eligible for treatment at CD4 count 500. Currently people obtain treatment at CD4 count 350.

This will ensure that more of our people who are living with HIV will be able to live long and healthy lives!

Already many people living with HIV live healthy and productive lives which has increased life expectancy to 60 in our country in only a few years.

To further improve the health of women during and immediately after pregnancy, later this month the Minister of Health will launch the innovative MOMCONNECT programme.

Through this service, pregnant women will receive health messages on their cellular phones advising them on how to ensure the health of the baby.

Compatriots, to take forward progress made in advancing women's development, I have established a new Ministry in the Presidency responsible for women.

The relocated Ministry and its supporting department will continue to play an oversight role and monitor the status of women in the public sector, civil society and the private sector.

I have directed the Department of Women to be ready to launch the first report on the Status of Women in the country in August next year.

Compatriots,
Today we are celebrating the role of all women who sacrificed their lives and went through many hardships to make South Africa a better place to live in.

We are celebrating women homemakers, workers, subsistence farmers, farm workers, professionals, grandmothers who head households, entrepreneurs and women from all walks of life, who continue to work tirelessly to make South Africa a better place.

Allow me as well today to single out for a special acknowledgement, the ANC Women's League.

The League has contributed immensely to the progressive policies that advance women in the country, since its formation.

The very 50/50 gender parity that we are striving towards, was achieved through the hard work and leadership of the ruling party's Women's League.

We also thank all women's organisations in business, faith-based community, labour, non-governmental organisations, cooperatives, community based organisations, care givers and indeed all who each day, contribute to building a better life for all.

Allow me also to pay my respects to uMama Thandeni Joyce Masina Dube who was buried in Soweto this morning. She was the Mother of Jabu Masina who was in the famous Delmas Treason trial with his MK Unit members Ting - Ting Masango, Joseph Makhura and Neo Potsane.

We bid farewell to this courageous mother who remained strong and defiant when her son and his comrades faced the death penalty.

We also pay tribute to many women who suffered immensely while their husbands or children were in exile or in prison.

Despite persecution, they remained unfazed and unshaken in their belief that the dawn of freedom and democracy in their country would happen in their lifetime.

In honour of all these remarkable women, we will not rest until we achieve the total transformation of our country into a truly non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous society.

Together let us move South Africa forward towards a non-sexist future!

Malibongwe igama lamakhosikazi!

I thank you.