



**MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES**

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**REMARKS BY MME MAITE NKOANA-MASHABANE,
MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY FOR WOMEN, YOUTH
AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ON THE OCCASION
OF A VIRTUAL POLICY DIALOGUE WEBINAR ON
ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF
COVID-19**

Programme Director, Advocate Mikateko Joyce Maluleke

Deputy Minister, Professor Hlengiwe Mkhize

Honourable Chief Whip and other Honourable Members of
Parliament

Representatives of the Business Sector, Civil Society and
Faith-Based Organisations

Leadership of the Amathole District Municipality

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

Let me thank you for joining us today in this dialogue on an important topic on *Economic Justice Rights in the context of COVID-19*.

This dialogue is hosted as part of the National Women Month activities which provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made and the challenges that continue to face us in the emancipation of women and women empowerment. It is also a unique opportunity to reflect on how far we have come in realising economic justice of women in our country.

This year we celebrate Women Month under difficult circumstances due the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We should agree that just like political rights, economic rights are also fundamental human rights. Until the economic rights of women are fully realised, women will not be completely free.

Economic transformation and the empowerment of women within the economy have been the stated goals of the democratic government since 1994.

Programme Director,

Over the last 26 years of our democratic dispensation, we have made significant progress in the emancipation and empowerment of women in the political area.

However, more work needs to be done to achieve the economic justice of women in our country. The challenge for Government over the years has been to ensure that women are not only integrated into the formal economy, but also equipped with the education and skills required to participate in a modern economy.

On its part, Government has enacted a number of legislations to promote the attainment of gender-equality and women empowerment. These include the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act and the Employment Equity Act.

Furthermore, the Government has introduced a range of policies and programmes designed to facilitate women's economic empowerment. These policies are also aim to provide business

resources, information and opportunities for South African women entrepreneurs, as well as a various interventions designed to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality.

However, challenges in implementing these noble policies and ensuring that women benefit from these policies remain.

Distinguished Colleagues,

As our country continues its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the short and long-term effects of this pandemic mostly affect the economic well-being of women. We therefore need to improve our efforts so that women can benefit from COVID-19 relief interventions including funding ones.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all know that even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were many barriers to the full realisation of women's economic justice and rights. Issues of economic justice disproportionately impact women and girls.

Women still work in vulnerable conditions and in low-paying jobs. In addition, women still do not have access to necessary finance and resources. Equal access to resources and opportunities, decent work with fair wages and safe working conditions, and the right to organize all of these are critical components of economic justice. Women play a critical role in breaking the cycle of poverty.

We are also aware that when women have sustainable incomes they invest in their communities and families buying or growing more and healthier food, investing in their family's health care and medicine, and using their income to pay for their children's education or training.

Programme Director,

Pillar 5 of the National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide speaks to Economic Empowerment. As the country regroup and embark on the development of the economic recovery plan, women must be at the centre such plan or such plan should be gender responsive.

I am therefore confident that today's discussions will contribute to valuable inputs to advance women's access to financial and economic resources.

The webinar is also an opportunity to reflect on how Government and other stakeholders such as Parliament, business sector and civil society could work together to further ensure that women's voices are represented in key economic sectors of our country.

I also trust that the discussions today will propose alternatives to deepen the participation of women in the economy in the context of current COVID-19 pandemic. We should therefore use this platform to propose strategies for advocating for attainment of full and equal access to public and essential services and benefits.

In conclusion,

Let us emerge from this policy dialogue with clear and practical recommendations that will enrich our inputs toward the development of the economic recovery plan and other government interventions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I Thank You.