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Speech on The Women's Parliament of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature

**Theme: Empowering women to fight the double scourge
of Gender-Based Violence and COVID-19**

By

**Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons
with Disabilities - Prof Hlengiwe Mkhize**

Date: 27 August 2020

Madam Speaker

Members of the Executive

Members of the Provincial Legislature

Honorable Speakers and Mayors of District Municipalities

Speaker of Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature: Hon. Helen
Sauls, August

Whip of Women's Caucus: Hon T Gaya

Chairperson of Committees: Hon N Nkopane

Chairperson of the Women's Caucus: Hon B Fanta

All Chairpersons of Women's Caucuses in All Districts: Councillors
District Representatives

Provincial Police Commissioner: Lt General Ntshinga

Commission of Gender Equality: Commissioner M Botha

Moderators: Honorable: F Nkomoyi

: Honorable: M Qoboshiyane

Hon Chairperson, let my first word be a word of thanks, to the Hon speaker and members of this, August house, for giving me an opportunity to have a conversation on the topic, **“Empowering Women to fight the double pandemic: the scourge of Gender Based Violence and Covid 19”**. In our engagement let us, please, bear in mind that our getting together is taking place during our historic month, under the theme: **Generation Equality: Realising Women’s Rights for an Equal Future**. This theme was introduced by the UN Women, taking it from our discussions in Beijing in 1995, emphasizing that, we need uncomfortable conversations between the generation, which was in Beijing in 1995 and, our youth and young adults so as to achieve gender equality by the year 2030.

This month also brings into focus efforts towards ending gender discrimination and gender-based violence and femicide and, advance the rights of women and girls in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. The month is intended to be an opportunity to mobilise women and strengthen their organised formations towards the development of sustainable action-coalitions, for tangible out comes. For example, where we talk about economic justice for women, as a human right, we have to think in a co-ordinated and integrated framework. Our coalitions should bring to the table a woman entrepreneur or women in a co-operative or a women owned SME, the established player, the financier and all other enablers like, policy makers, whose authority in law is to remove all the barriers and ensure access to markets.

The August month is the time to reflect on gains, achievements and also to sharply focus on perennial challenges. The month is utilised as an opportunity to mobilise women and strengthen their organised formations, hopefully, not to celebrate but to have frank discussions about failures in policy implementation and weaknesses in the management of state resources. The women’s caucus can call upon any member of the executive, for an explanation, if they pick up that there are weaknesses in the administration of priority programmes, in ways which are not advancing the women’s struggles for gender equality.

We, gathered here, should be the first ones to demand accountability in instances of corruption which is so- prevalent today. Our people have reached a stage where you cannot, just tell them about policy, as their expectations are more about what may contribute towards and, be done, respectively, to improving their quality of life. So, 26 years into democracy, our women's month and future ones, demand us to dig deeper, and not to turn a blind eye when implementers make a mockery of our laws and policies.

Before I unpack the topic, let me briefly remind honourable members that inequalities, discrimination, prejudice, bigotry, sexism and homophobia have a long history, which manifests in patriarchal, toxic and harmful practices and, negatively, impacts the most vulnerable sectors of our society. It has not only destroyed families and damaged communities over the decades, but has impacted the life of every, South African, in a profound manner. It would be a missed opportunity if we, as the legislature, fail to reflect from a historical perspective. The fault lines we are witnessing today are deeply rooted in our colonial and apartheid legislation, policies and systems.

Since 1994, South Africa has made significant progress in putting in place a comprehensive and redress- oriented legislative and policy framework for advancing human rights, equality and the empowerment of women. Through the Constitution and a range of other statutory provisions, South Africa has sought to protect and promote these empowerment opportunities thereby fostering human dignity for women. We have made gains in advancing women's rights, in broadening women's access to education, health care, and social support, as well as in improving their participation in the economy and decision-making positions. However, the numbers are far too low, hence, we don't feel the impact.

For the benefit of members of this house, and, with respect, allow me to outline the role of the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. The Department's mandate is to ensure that disadvantaged persons are prioritized and preferred as direct beneficiaries of development programmes. Our position is that it is only redress compliant programmes, which conscientiously rectify gender imbalances

of the past, by benefitting women, youth and persons with disabilities that will bring about gender equality and an equitable inclusive society.

Gender Based Violence and Femicide Pandemic.

The second pandemic in our society that is terrorising dehumanising women and children, is strongly condemned.

My heart breeds when, **Women's Senzeni na-** calls, are daily ignored by some of our men. This week we buried, Asithandile Kwasa Zozo Lugalo, a Wits University student, brutally, murdered, in her home town Idutshwa, in the Eastern Cape. It is alleged that, as it is often the case, she was murdered by her ex-boyfriend as she was engaged in terminating their relationship. Asithandile was an activist, in her own right, as she, also, mobilized protesters in her community against the killing of Uyinene. May her soul rests in peace.

I remember as if it was yesterday, when the University of Cape Town community protested after their registered student Uyinene Mrwetyana disappeared. After a national outcry through mass media, it emerged that she had been locked up in a local post office, assaulted, raped and then bludgeoned to death with a scale. That led to an emotionally bleeding week, for the whole country, filled with protests by, university students, women's groups, political parties, government and even schools across the country also some of you. Some of you who attended the launch of the Lusikisiki district development model, you 'll recall women's testimonies relating to experiences of abuse, sexual assaults and abductions under the guise of culture and male privileges. What was sad is that the offensive practice, against women's rights, has continued in democracy.

It is sickening to think of women and children being assaulted so brazenly and their lives ended, fatally, by people intimately close to them, and, also coming from same communities as them. Nobody, let alone young persons at the cusp of their dreams, deserves such indecencies. The toxic patriarchal mind-set seems unstoppable, 'ayinamkhawulo' even when the nation is walking in the shadow of a deadly disaster, the COVID 19. That's why a Harvard **Law Professor, Prof Derrick Bell**, in his book

titled, **WE ARE NOT SAVED** said, when addressing continuing discrimination in the USA,

“The harvest is passed, the summer is Ended and, we are not saved”.

In addressing the challenges of GBVF, on 18 September 2019, President Cyril Ramaphosa, led a high level multi-party debate, in a special sitting of Parliament, the outcome of which was the adoption of the Emergency Response Action Plan (ERAP). The goal of the adopted plan was to combat violence against women and children through a coordinated government and civil society plan.

When receiving the Emergency Response Action Plan (ERAP) report on 5 May 2020, President Ramaphosa, reminded all of us that this plan was to be implemented over six months. As part of the plan’s prevention pillar, a number of mass media campaigns have been rolled out nationwide spearheaded by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS). This has been complemented by sensitivity training workshops for law-enforcement and judicial officers, as well as specific gender-based violence (GBV) awareness campaigns targeting men’s formations, offenders, youth at risk, and tertiary institutions.

Through an intensive consultative process, members of the Interim Steering Committee on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide produced the NSP, that is anchored on six pillars: namely, (a) Accountability, Coordination and Leadership, (b) Prevention and Rebuilding the Social Cohesion, (c) Justice, Safety and Protection, (d) Response, Care, Support and Healing; (e) Economic Power; and (f) Research and Information Management.

After the cabinet had approved the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, , the IMC went on to hold virtual meetings, it is chaired by the Minister for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane , Other members are Ministers of Police; Finance; Justice and Correctional Services; Social Development and Public Service and Administration.

Our role as a department is to serve as the secretariat to the IMC, to undertake work relating to the institutional arrangements and coordination to ensure the effective implementation of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), 2020-2030, and the formation of the National Council for Gender-Based Violence and Femicide. The Council will also have representatives of civil society across South Africa and provides a multi-sectorial, coherent strategic policy and programming framework to ensure a coordinated national response towards the eradication of GBVF.

Two weeks ago the Minister of Justice ensured that parliament approves three Bills , namely, the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Bill, Domestic Violence Amendment Act Bill and Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act Bill. The intention is to create a victim-friendly criminal justice system, to improve the conviction rate and to re-visit our sentencing and imprisonment regime. Failure to prosecute and sentence is perceived by activists and feminists in particular as promoting impunity.

Honourable Chairperson, Government has initiated the launch of the District Development Model, we are convinced that implementation of priority programmes at a district level can be monitored and evaluated by the community at large. **Thus strong leadership** by community leaders , street committee members , women, youth, persons with disabilities and the LGBTQI+ sector at these district and local levels is **critical to promote, SAFER COMMUNITIES, and protect vulnerable groups, like women and children, as the National Development Plan, recommends.**

The District Develop Model must also be used to address, at a local level, systemic injustices, discrimination, exclusion and hate crimes that the LGBTQI+ sector faces, and which have been exacerbated by COVID-19. At this level they suffer from violence perpetrated on them even by their own families. We should call upon our societies to ensure that they are not kicked out of their family homes, during this critical period, as that further subject them to further atrocities, inequalities and inhuman treatment. At a local level , we as public representatives and champions of our laws and policies, have to lead from the front as part of coalitions which could be a coordinating and managing structure as in

Pillar one of the NSP . It is through such local structures that we have to join hands with tribal authorities and confront cultural practices which are contributing to the scourge, like the abduction of girls and younger women, and marrying them to older men. We have an opportunity to confront patriarchy and show how it creates a fertile ground for GBVF.

Hence, leading from the front would make us **Pillars of our Communities. We must not allow ourselves, as elected leaders, to be outsmart by, Sir Winston Churchill, who was regarded as the Pillar of the Church, despite him protesting that, he is merely a church supporter.**

COVID 19 Pandemic.

South Africa like the global community as a whole, is in a COVID-19 pandemic. As of today, the world tally on confirmed cases stands at 24 million, and sadly we have a confirmed 822 000 deaths. In South Africa alone, the number of confirmed cases are lingering at 615,701 thousand. While fatalities sadly, are now at 13,502.00. In the Eastern Cape, the host province for this webinar- the picture is more gloomy, with 85 472 confirmed cases- and 2828 deaths. We draw strength from the fact that there are now 80 614 recoveries.

Although the regulations have been relaxed and, we are now at level 2, we have to remain vigilant and ensure that we adhere to all the protocols. Our communities need all of us to constantly remind them of their own responsibilities in preventing the spread of the virus. As public representatives we have to scrutinize government interventions by testing the impact of interventions through beneficiaries of our public health system.

Around the globe, evidence shows that more women are likely to live in poverty; to be excluded from the economy and economic opportunities; to work in vulnerable sectors, to be low-paid or in under-valued jobs; and earn less than men as the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic deepens. The short- and longer-term effects of the crisis on women's economic well-being would be felt over a long period of time. Women are more likely to work in informal and low-paid jobs – the very jobs that are most prone to disruption during public health emergencies. These jobs often lack the legal

and social protections that could help mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis. When considered alongside the gender norms that restrict women's and girls' roles in society and their intersectional identities, it is evident that COVID-19 has laid bare the scars of inequality.

Economic Justice and Right to inclusion.

The Constitution permits organs of state (such as government DEPARTMENTS and public entities) to implement a preferential procurement policy that advances persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. Section 217(3) provides for legislation that will prescribe a framework within which the policy must be implemented to be enacted. Thus, the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act 5 of 2000 (PPPFA) and the regulations published under it in 2011 (PPPFA Regulations), prescribe requirements regarding black economic empowerment (BEE) considerations for state tenders.

The Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act, [No. 53 of 2003] advances economic transformation and enhance the economic participation of black people in the South African economy. The Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, with its corresponding Codes of Good Practice (2007), stipulate a preferential point system that encourages the use of women-owned enterprises to benefit from preferential procurement of all state organs.

It's important to ask questions why are women still the face of poverty. So, in our dialogues, we have to ask for disaggregated data, on the pillars of the economy like:

- Public Procurement- Accessing procurement opportunities in government and the private sector is still hard for many women owned businesses.

Government have to device strategies, which will ensure that women owned businesses get not less the 40% of procurement.

Through the Amathole District Turnaround Strategy (MTAS) 2018-2023 we are starting to see the efforts of this strategy in action by responding to the needs of its

citizens. The District's vision of building a smart district through, Amathole District, has shown its commitment to gender-responsive budgeting, by working in partnership with the UN Women and the GIZ development agency. The executive management of the Municipality has been assisted to identify women owned businesses and actually prepare them to tender for business opportunities. Through these set asides, our department has partnered with the district so as to ensure that the model is replicated.

- Incentive Programmes. Through the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, multinational companies which are approved by government to establish their plants in our economic zones earn points for empowering locals, the question we should ask is how many women have benefitted.
- SME's Programmes **Women SMMEs suffer structural inequality** – SMMEs in rural and township areas have unique challenges that are linked to location away from business clusters and networks of suppliers and customers. There is also a low ICT penetration rate, with historical failure to invest in human capital. Knowledge, skills, exposure, larger firm dominance, lack of funding, trust, structural inequality and red tape are all causes of structural inequality.
- Supply Chain Management in different Departments in all spheres of Government should be monitored closely and relevant officials held accountable for failure to empower women.
- Land Ownership by women is crucial for their inclusion in the economy. It is our duty as public representatives to ensure that women are allocated land as part of the land redistribution, also that they are enabled to produce goods and to access markets.
- **Lack of access to technology** – Lack of technology skills is another constraint facing Women owned businesses. The adequate use of appropriate technology could be a competitive advantage for women owned businesses. We all have to ensure that the cost of

data is reduced so that all citizens could benefit from the fourth industrial revolution.

- Essentials like modes of transport, access to energy and water are all enablers.
- **Lack of access to Finance** – The major challenge is the risk averse posture of the established financial services in South Africa. Red tape, collateral requirements and other lending criteria make accessing existing funding particularly difficult for start-ups. The poor credit rating of some entrepreneur's further inhibit access to finance.

In conclusion, through mass mobilization of the people's power we have an opportunity to deepen our conversations and rebuild structures similar to the ones which empowered communities to dismantle the apartheid regime. This calls for hard work and discipline in ensuring that we all fight the pandemic of GBVF. The prevention pillar is all in our hands, we have to promote social cohesion and fight for the safe communities for all.

As public representatives we have to ensure that government policies are implemented efficiently within the given timelines. We have to ask uncomfortable questions, whenever corrupt practices show its ugly face. Good governance should be the foundation of repositioning the economic architecture which should be, completely, different from what we had before COVID 19, a situation that pushed for exclusive growth and left, almost 80% of the population, with the highest level of unemployment and unspeakable poverty and hunger.

As President Mandela said, it is all in our hands, we are this generation which must turn the tide.

Malibongwe!!!