



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTRY OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MINISTER MAITE NKOANA MASHABANE
SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE COMMONWEALTH HIGH-LEVEL
VIRTUAL MEETING FOR MINISTERS OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS AND
GENDER ON COVID-19,
THURSDAY, 03 SEPTEMBER 2020

***DIALOGUE ON PRIORITY THEME: "COVID-19 IN THE CONTEXT OF ENDING VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS"***

Your Excellency, Prof Margaret Kobia, Cabinet Secretary for Public Service, Youth and Gender of Kenya

Your Excellency, The Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

Greetings from South Africa,

It is my pleasure to join you today at this important virtual meeting convened under the theme: *Covid-19 in the context of ending violence against women and girls"*

As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused tremendous damage to the global economy. Many countries across the globe responded to this pandemic by introducing different restrictions in order to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

However, these measures affected economic activities across the world. South Africa and the entire African continent have not been spared from this global economic challenges due to COVID-19.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The most vulnerable citizens of our society have been hit hard, especially women, who were actively participating in the informal economy and other sectors.

The pandemic has worsened by pre-existing economic inequalities, such as minimal representation and participation of women in the economic spheres and the persistent gender pay gap.

In our situation, the lockdown led to the rise in the second pandemic of gender-based violence and femicide during the level 4 and 5 of the lockdown.

Chairperson,

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, we are working harder to improve women's access to economic opportunities.

We are also part of the United Nations Generation Equality campaign, a global campaign to achieve gender equality by 2030.

As part of this campaign, we are part of two Action Coalitions, one on economic justice and rights and another on gender-based violence and femicide.

These Action Coalitions mobilise governments, civil society and the private sector for collective action. They give us an opportunity to work with leaders to achieve real change in the lives of women

As a country, we have embarked on and introduced various legislations, adopted and introduced various national projects, programmes and campaigns aimed at addressing and improving the status of women, and ensuring full and equal economic empowerment.

Excellencies,

Through the Emergency Response Action Plan (ERAP), we have managed to redirect substantial resources to combat gender-based violence and femicide.

We have made important progress in reforming its laws to give greater protection to survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

We have also increased the number of shelters and care centers for survivors, to improve the capacity of our police to deal with crimes of sexual violence, and to improve services to women and children who have to go through the criminal justice system.

As a result of COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa has accelerated its efforts to address violence against women and girls through the implementation of the National Strategic Plan.

This include a strategic focus on strengthening intervention at the prevention level by changing social norms and behavior, broadening access to justice for gender-based violence and femicide survivors.

We are also strengthening existing architecture and promoting accountability, and the creation of more economic opportunities for women to attain economic power.

Our Department is moving swiftly to establishment of the National Council to end the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide. This Council will comprise of representatives from civil society and government.

Chairperson,

Our President, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa has announced a R500-billion Covid-19 package for the country.

The relief measures are meant to curb the triple challenges of unemployment, inequality and poverty and to minimise the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives and livelihoods of South Africans

As part of advancing the rights of women, Government set aside 40% for women, 30% for Youth and 7% for persons with disabilities for public procurement of women-owned businesses.

We are also implementing the District Development Model across district, ward and community level to address gender inequalities, unemployment, lack of access to information on economic opportunities and business funding as well as local markets, among others.

To ensure that all state organs make a contribution towards gender equality, the following principles will be adopted:

- Ensuring that economic recovery plans, strategies and interventions for the respective industries include representation of women, youth and persons with disabilities.
- Targets are set per industry and sectorial master plans for women's economic empowerment in order to respond to inclusive economic participation, ownership, access to resources and wage equality.
- Strategic leadership and coordination across government is critical to mainstream empowerment programmes on women, youth and persons with disabilities.

In conclusion I wish to commend the Commonwealth for its commitment to addressing the issue of women empowerment and gender equality.

Thank you.