



SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STATEMENT

TO BE PRESENTED BY MINISTER BATHABILE DLAMINI

**62nd SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF
WOMEN**

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NEW YORK

Chairperson

South Africa congratulates you and the Bureau on your election as Chairperson at the 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered by Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the Gambia on behalf of the African Group.

Chairperson

This year marks the centenary of two internationally renowned South African icons who were passionate advocates for the rights of women and children. South African and the world will celebrate the centenary of the birth of Mama Nontsikelelo Albertina Sisulu and Tata Nelson Mandela. These two icons selflessly served the cause of humanity and believed in the total emancipation of women in the political, economic and social spheres and that women's rights are human rights. Today we invite you to celebrate their legacy.

This year's theme is in our view a subject that has been neglected for far too long. Gender equality and the empowerment of women should move beyond political rhetoric. The UN system and member states have an obligation to demonstrate results in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW must have tangible, action

oriented outcomes which bring about real change in the lives of women and girls.

South Africa's Constitution is founded on the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms, non-racialism and non-sexism.

We remain committed to fast-track the implementation of our obligations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment as outlined in the SDGs 2030, the African Union's Agenda 2063, the SADC gender and development protocol as well as our own National Development Plan 2030.

Women living in rural areas are the backbone of families, communities and rural economies. They continue to demonstrate tremendous resilience in the face of multi-dimensional poverty, inequality and the struggle for a better life. Despite global efforts, women and girls in rural areas continue to face structural barriers, patriarchy, gender inequality, socio-economic deprivation, violence, and exclusion from leadership and decision-making. They face multiple intersecting forms of discrimination including in relation to inheritance, harmful practices, child marriage and human trafficking.

Chairperson

South Africa's democracy replaced repugnant apartheid laws with equality laws and policies and programmes to advance women's rights and ensure gender equality. Massive infrastructure programmes have improved access to basic services, quality education, public health care, housing and comprehensive social security and labour reforms. From 1 May this year we will introduce a national minimum wage, which will improve especially the livelihoods of women in rural areas.

South Africa has made inroads in eliminating the scourge of HIV and Aids, and more than halved Aids deaths between 2002 and 2017. Among the key programmes is the *She Conquers Campaign* to empower young women and girls and reduce new HIV infections and teenage pregnancy.

We have rolled out shelters, care centres, victim empowerment services to support abused women and children. Our 24-hour GBV Command Centre provides country-wide, dedicated support and counselling to victims of GBV.

South Africa is making strides to ensure women's economic inclusion and expand access to productive resources, including land. We are supporting women farmers and cooperatives to broaden women's access across the agriculture value chain and other economic sectors. This is in line with South Africa's

programme of radical socio-economic transformation as reaffirmed by our President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, in his recent State of the Nation Address. This includes the expropriation of land without compensation.

To build on our achievements regarding universal primary education, we are expanding access to early childhood development and delivering quality primary and secondary education to all rural children. From this year, we will extend free tertiary education to learners from poor families.

I thank you