ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR WOMEN, MP SUSAN SHABANGU, ON THE OCCASION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM FOR NO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

National Assembly, Parliament of RSA

TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2017

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Honorable Speaker
Honorable Members
Distinguished Guests

This year marks 19 years since the United Nations adopted the 16-Days of Activism Campaign for No Violence Against Women and Children. This debate is important for us to reflect on progress we have made and the challenges we continue to face in building a safe society free from fear and violence. Ending the scourge of violence against women and children remains a top priority of this government. It is for this reason that we have extended the 16 Days of Activism Campaign to 365 Days of continuous campaigning, mobilization and activism to transform attitudes and behaviors for the
common good.

Vision 2030 of the National Development Plan and the UN SDGs – sets targets for addressing persistent discrimination against women and addressing patriarchal attitudes and challenges of triple challenges of inequality and access to education.

Patriarchy continues to deny women opportunities to lead the lives they desire. Further, social, cultural, religious and educational barriers also continue to limit the scope for women advancement and prospects for entering the job market.

As government our programmes are structured to respond to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals – particularly Goal 5 which seeks to achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. We continue to intensify our efforts to enhance skills and capabilities of women, especially rural women.

This year we have witnessed increases in femicides and overall violence against women and children. Lately, this violence has taken more barbaric acts of burning victims and even cannibalism in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.
As promised, in partnership with provincial government and various institutions we launched the National Dialogues on Violence Against Women and Children programme in the Limpopo in 2016. These dialogues enable us to engage with communities to better understand the root causes of violence against women and corrective children. They provide a platform for victims and perpetrators of violence against women and children to interact and to find common solutions.

Our National Dialogues have attracted both men and women who came forward to talk about their experiences in relation to violence against women and children. We now know that violence against women and children is a complex, multi-layered, inter-generational and systemic problem.

So far, we have concluded Dialogues in the Limpopo, in the Northern Cape and in Mpumalanga Provinces. These Dialogues took place in all district municipalities of these provinces. Yesterday, we launched the Eastern Cape chapter of our Dialogues on Violence Against Women and Children in partnership with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

We will be conducting Dialogues in all District Municipalities of the Eastern Cape. The Eastern Cape Traditional Leadership will be participating in all our
dialogues, including *Imbumba Ya Makhosikazi*, the wives of traditional leaders who are concerned about violence against women and children.

Preliminary findings from the dialogues include a number of identified factors perpetuating gender-based violence in our society, social, traditional and cultural norms that facilitate gender-based violence.

We have found that violence against women and children arises out of poverty, despair and substance abuse. In some communities we have noted incidents of incest, teenage pregnancies and high levels of substance abuse which have produced Fetal Alcohol Syndrome which is linked to alcohol consumption during pregnancy. This is presenting more challenges for early child development.

After each dialogue in the provinces, the Department of Women shares such information with the provincial government and relevant institutions to help inform policy interventions.

It is also expected that the findings arising from the National Dialogues will contribute to the revision of the Integrated Programme of Action Against Violence Against Women and Children to be completed in 2018.

I wish to commend the increasing involvement of men,
who have taken a stand and declared “#Not in their Name”, “#Stop Excuses” and “#There is No Excuse for Violence”.

Conversations on the role of men in changing gender relations are a necessity in a society that cares about changing attitudes and mindsets in transforming unequal power relations between men and women.

The SANAC Men’s sector and movements such as Takuwani Riime, are playing a leading role in mobilizing men to stand up against gender-based violence.

A successful Men’s Parliament was held this past weekend and the Men’s March here in Cape Town coincided with International Men’s Day. We welcome efforts by men who participated in this forum, including Ubuhle Bamadoda, Show Me Your Number, What’s in Your Pocket, Not In My Name, our Father, Men on the Mountain, and Dad’s in the Picture. We are pleased to note the five-year “#No Excuse” campaign to change behaviours and work with over 10,000 taverns to prevent violence associated with alcohol abuse.

The Men’s Parliament resolved that, the Men’s Parliament sittings will take place every two years at national level, annually at provincial level and six months
at district level, every three months at local level and daily, weekly and monthly at ward and street level.

Men are now talking about the problems of absent fathers and impact on families and the need to impart values. These campaigns will help nurture young boys to become better citizens that uphold the Constitution.

During the 16-Days of Activisms, which will be launched in the Eastern Cape this weekend, men must be at the center of advocacy in tackling the scourge of violence against women and children.

We welcome and support the Namola App, which has been initiated and rolled-out nationally. Since its launch, there have been more than 100 000 downloads. Namola is a crime response app that allows users to share their GPS co-ordinates, name and nature of the emergency with a 24/7 response call centre.

This online panic button guarantees users a call back within 90 seconds. It points out exact location, making it easy for emergency services and the Police to respond effectively. Cellphones are useful tools in our fight against gender–based violence.

DialDirect, is sponsoring the Namola App and I am pleased to work with Namola’s Chief Ambassador, Yusuf Abramjee, who is here with us today. It is from initiatives
like these that more South Africans are reporting crime and gender-based violence.

Together with the Minister of Police, we have endorsed Namola App and I urge everyone, especially women, to download the App and report Crime!

I am also pleased that the business sector has taken a stand in supporting the fight against crime and violence against women and children.

First4Women is investing money to fighting gender-based violence. Other companies and NGO’s are also following suit. We can only do more as a collective.

Our continuous partnerships with the faith-based organisations; like Rhema Church – UmKhosi wa Madoda, National Religious Leaders Forum, the Jewish Board of Deputies, including religious programmes on Radio and television. These are efforts to ensure that the message of no violence against women and children reach all sectors of society where they spend their time.

Faith-Based Organisations are critical as advocates for a South Africa that is safe for women and children in part because their stakeholders are highly receptive to their messages. Research institutions have done a lot of work and we are now looking at ways in which their work can
help us in formulating our responses to the scourge of violence against women and children.

Within government, I am pleased that every province and most government institutions have a programme responding to Violence Against Women and Children as part of the 16-Days Campaign.

We will be partnering with the Department of Transport to maximize the reach and impact of our message on Violence Against Women and Children in their Arrive Alive Campaign this festive season.

We are also continuously working closely with SANAC and “She Conquers” on issues of adolescence girl children. “She Conquers” is a three-year campaign which focuses on decreasing new HIV infections in girls and young women up to the age of 24, reducing teenage pregnancies, reducing gender-based violence and retaining young women and adolescents in school.

Through these partnerships, we have grown awareness regarding the negative impact of gender-based violence through the #365 Days campaign and how to eradicate it. We have also increased reporting on gender-based violence in partnership with the Police. More community members are able to identify abuse and have the confidence to report violations of their rights and dignity.
The Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Root Causes of Violence against Women and Children in May 2012 to investigate the root causes of violence against women and children with the objective to develop a comprehensive strategy. The Committee comprises the Ministers of Social Development, Women, Justice and Constitutional Development, Health, Home Affairs, Police and Basic Education.

The work of the Committee culminated in the diagnostic review to ascertain government’s response to Violence Against Women and Children by reviewing both the institutional and programmatic mechanisms by which government addresses Violence Against Women and Children.

As I conclude, we must be worried about what has happened in our psyche as a society. We need to integrate values of Ubuntu with our democratic values. These values must be reflected into our actions. We need a discourse on the destruction of our cultural norms.

Freedom would be meaningless if women and children cannot walk freely in our streets. Freedom will be meaningless if our children cannot play freely in their neighborhoods. Freedom will be meaningless if the
home is no longer a safe place to be for women and children.
I Thank You!

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