

Mayoral Address at Women's Month occasion

10 August 2017

Malukazi – Isipingo Areas

Programme director,

Councillors present,

Abefundisi,

Amakhosi,

Progressive women,

Umanyano,

Iziphika,

Amantombazane,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Greetings,

This year we are celebrating and commemorating the role played by women of struggle under the theme: "The Year of OR Tambo: Women United in Moving South Africa Forward". This year's celebration coincides with the centenary of struggle icon OR Tambo.

The year 2017 marks the 61st anniversary of the Women's March to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956. On that day up to 20 000 women of all races, class and religious persuasions protested against the extension of Pass Laws. The march was a turning point in the role of women in the struggle for freedom and our society at large.

The 2017 celebrations pay tribute to women and their role in the liberation struggle. OR Tambo was a strong advocate for gender equality. During the Conference of the Women in Luanda in 1981, he said: "The mobilisation of women is the task, not only of women alone, or of men alone, but of all of us, men and women alike, comrades in struggle. The mobilisation of the people into active resistance and

struggle for liberation demands the energies of women no less than of men.”

He added: “A system based on the exploitation of man-by-man can in no way avoid the exploitation of women by the male members of society. There is therefore no way in which women in general can liberate themselves without fighting to the end the exploitation of man by man, both as a concept and as a social system.”

Women’s Month takes place against a backdrop of an increase in the levels of violence and brutality against women and children in our society. Since the start of the year, a number of incidents of violence and women abuse have made headlines.

This year’s event also takes place against a backdrop of a poor performing economy. Invariably, women will be most affected by the economic decline and bear the brunt of its resultant negative economic and social effects.

The 2017 celebrations will build on the announcements made by President Zuma with regard to women economic emancipation; addressing issues of gender based violence and give more impetus to government and society’s efforts in this regard.

We are focusing our energies on the issues of violence against women and call on society to protect women and children. We will not wait for 16 days of activism to start with mobilization of women but we will start now. The struggle for women continues and it is an everyday struggle that we need to redouble our efforts in order to win.

WOMEN’S MONTH BACKGROUND

- We celebrate Women’s Month as a tribute to women in the liberation struggle.
- The women of 1956 set the tone for gender equality and empowerment in a democratic South Africa.
- Through their brave actions South African women have taken their rightful place in parliament, government and civil society.

- Through their sacrifices we now live in a country which recognises women as equal citizens, with equal rights and responsibilities.

STOP WOMEN ABUSE

While a lot of progress is being made in making South Africa a better place for women, the country faces a serious problem of violence and abuse directed towards women and girls.

The country has witnessed horrific incidents recently of the killing of women by men known to them such as intimate partners and also total strangers. Several children have also been attacked and killed.

These incidents have caused enormous pain and distress in the country.

The crimes against women take many forms - physical, sexual, economic, psychological and emotional, and they all represent a violation of human rights and dignity. The crimes include sexual offences, human trafficking, domestic violence and the criminal victimization of elderly women who are accused of witchcraft.

The police indicate that the biggest problem with the policing of these crimes is that they usually happen behind closed doors and in secluded areas where it is very difficult to police.

Another challenge is that victims have been known to withdraw cases in domestic violence and sexual offences where the offender is known to the victim.

In these cases families may intervene and reach an agreement among themselves to maintain a conspiracy of silence in exchange for money or some other financial benefit.

This conduct is unacceptable as it further perpetuates violence against women and turns such crimes into a matter that can be resolved through cash transactions benefitting families.

In other cases, the survivors prefer to keep quiet rather than speak out, due to the stigma attached to sexual abuse.

Other families have to confront the tragedy of human trafficking which is a painful and despicable crime that is tantamount to modern day slavery.

Young women and girls communicate are promised jobs or visits abroad and end up being forced into prostitution in hijacked buildings or brothels locally or in foreign countries.

We urge parents to take a keen interest on the activities of their children on social media and provide ongoing advice and support so that they can be protected.

Most are enticed to join the trafficking rings via social media.

- All South Africans must act to prevent abuse and to ensure a safer society for women and children.
- We can and must do more to prevent violence against women, support survivors of abuse and bring perpetrators to justice.
- Through our collective efforts we can create greater awareness; reduce the number of sexual offences and attacks on women and children.
- Government alone cannot eradicate this scourge and calls on all sectors to partner with it in creating safer communities.
- Gender equality is one of the basic principle and foundation in our constitution.

Women Economic Freedom

- Through our policies we are ensuring the full participation of women in the economy and driving an inclusive economy. The Mayor has launched the Radical Economic transformation framework that will cater for women in business and professionals.
- The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is central to our efforts to combat poverty and stimulate sustainable development.

- Government introduced the Gender Equality Bill to accelerate the empowerment of women and attain 50/50 gender parity for the country.
- Empowerment of women is everyone's business and needs the support of government, business, labour and civil society.
- Let us all work to remove the barriers which prevent women from entering and thriving in the labour market.

CALL for Women President

- The South African National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality ensures that gender equality is at the centre of our transformation process.
- It assists to eradicate the legacy of apartheid and to transform the rest of society, particularly the transformation of power relations between women and men.
- We are working to overcome the triple challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty which contribute to the root causes of violence against women.
- Over the last 23 years of democracy great strides have been made to ensure that women enjoy the same rights as their male counterparts in education, employment, property, inheritance and justice.
- It includes greater representation in politics, the judiciary, corporate boards and an overall improvements in livelihoods for women and mothers in our rural areas.
- South Africa has increased the access of girls in education, particular at a primary and early childhood development level.
- Legislation to create an enabling environment for women, and to improve their participation in the economy have been enacted.
- We believe that South Africa is ready to be led by a woman president and women in South Africa are more than capable to lead in all sectors of this country.

In Closing

Work continues to ensure that women have access to economic opportunities, basic services as well as safety and security in every community.

Work continues to ensure that every village has water, sanitation, electricity, good schools, clinics, land for farming and food production.

Government stands ready to work with women to ensure that the dividend of freedom and democracy can be enjoyed by women in the country, especially the poor and the working class.

I Thank you.