



**Welcome Address by Her Worship, Deputy Mayor Cllr
Fawzia Peer on the Occasion of the Women's
Networking Breakfast**

**15 September 2016 – 08h30
Chez Nous - Westville**

- Programme Directors,
- A team from Rawson Properties,
- Businesswomen,
- Speakers in different topics,
- Stakeholders and partners,
- Distinguished guests and dignitaries,
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- All protocol observed,

Good morning ladies!

It is with great pleasure to join you this morning. I honoured this Networking Breakfast because I have been asked to speak about a very important, yet interesting topic of empowering women and our economic inclusivity.

Programme Director, women empowerment is a top priority for our government. During a women empowerment address by Minister for Small Business Development, Honourable Lindiwe Zulu, she said:

“A plethora of measures introduced since 1994 to promote women empowerment and uphold gender equality, have drastically improved the position and conditions of women in our country. The living conditions of the majority of ordinary women have undergone significant qualitative change. But the unpalatable truth remains: Women continue to bear a disproportionate burden of poverty, inequality and unemployment, violence and abuse. Women continue to be marginalised and discriminated against in terms of economic opportunities, the labour market as well as access to land, credit, and finance.”

Ladies and gentlemen, it is true that women still face challenges in most areas of their lives. We face challenges in our communities, in our homes, in the workplace, in the business world and mainstream economy. This is because most of these places are dominated by men which drives the perception the men are more capable than women.

Women are not seen as leaders but rather subordinates. As a result, fewer women are in high positions like Directors of Boards.

This is evident in the PricewaterhouseCooper's 2014 Executive Director's Remuneration report which shows that at board level the gap between male and female executive directors widens and according to industry type.

For instance, there are only 13 percent of women operating in executive roles in the basic resources sector, compared to 87 percent of men operating in executive positions.

The financial services sector is also largely dominated by men at board level at 85 percent with a minority of women at 15 percent.

Ladies and gentlemen, this report shows that more work needs to be done to achieve better representative of women in high and leadership positions.

Other challenges faced by women, especially in the economy is access to finance, access to business opportunities and access to relevant markets. Women have also been discriminated against in the world of business. At times, society believed that for a business idea to be viable and sustainable, it has to be done by a man. We have seen transformation over the years as this stereotype has been bridged. Enough confidence has been gained in business women.

Now we need to dispel perceptions that women do not support each other and we bring each other down. For us to prosper, women must empower each other with a strong focus on the growth of young women.

Empowering can be executed in various mechanisms. It could be through transfer of skills and knowledge, it could be uplifting or giving back to your community, it could also be through mentoring individuals.

Also highly important, as women, we would like men to also play a role in empowering women so that we could lead and prosper in sectors perceived to be for men.

Women can be described as jacks of all trades. With the multi-roles that we play in society, we must find a balance between our domestic and leadership roles. It is highly important that we fulfil our duties in all the roles that we play.

As an economic and socially responsible Municipality which forms an integral part of the three spheres of Government, eThekweni Municipality plays a more developmental role as reflected in the City's Integrated Development Plan, the Provincial Growth and Development Plan and the National Development Plan.

Equally so, we have to be cognisant of the fact that government cannot work in isolation. Therefore, partnerships are of critical importance to address challenges bottle-necking the advancement of women in business.

EThekwini continues to affirm the advancement of equal opportunities for women as their male counterparts through codes of BBB-EE and affirmative action.

Additionally, eThekwini initiates programmes specifically focused on bridging the gender gap and sharing of information by the key business sectors and women in business, to assist women to position themselves for opportunities in building the South African economy.

Other programmes also focus on instilling entrepreneurial skills to build aspiring entrepreneurs to improve economic activities. As Government we are in full support of progressive initiatives.

In closing, we understand that the full participation of women is necessary to long-term, sustainable economic growth and social progression in the City.

I can therefore confidently say that the Municipality will continue to support and invest in women empowerment programmes and provide them with the relevant skills and support. This will allow them to position themselves for even greater opportunities thus contributing positively to the economic development of eThekwini.

In closing I wish to say we appreciate the role women play in societal growth. Women empowerment and development is a high priority in our Municipality!

Thank you!