

Notes for Mayor Zandile Gumede and Chairperson of ANC eThekweni Region

- Programme Director,
- NEC Members of the ANCWL,
- NEC Members of the ANC,
- PEC leadership,
- ANC leadership,
- Progressive Women,
- Alliance structures,
- Distinguished guests,
- Delegates,
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- Sanibonani,

Let me first take this opportunity as the Mayor of eThekweni Municipality and the Chairperson of the Region in welcoming you all to the city that shines. You have chosen an appropriate time to host your conference, at the start of Spring, a new and bright season filled with colour and freshness. Like the blooming of flowers - I hope that your discussions and deliberations will add fresh ideas and programmes to strengthen women in the organisation.

Chairman Mao of China once said – (I quote) "**Letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend is the policy for promoting progress in the arts and the sciences and a flourishing socialist culture in our land.**"

I hope you will turn this gathering into a festival of ideas that will be able to build this society into a non-sexist, democratic and prosperous

South Africa. Conferences are not only about electing but about strengthening the movement. I believe that the women's league leadership will be able to take this province into new heights.

The end of August means the end of Women's month but it doesn't mean that it is now a Men's month. In fact, we are now beginning a new season called a women's season. South Africa from now onwards must begin to internalise the fact that they will be led by a woman.

As the leadership of the ANC in eThekweni we are excited that you have chosen our city to host your Women's League Conference, eThekweni/Durban. We are proud that as the city of eThekweni we are led by women – we have a deputy mayor, chief whip and ANC has deployed more women at EXCO level compared to all other parties. It tells you that the ANC is a leader of society.

Comrade Chairperson,

We need to heighten the campaign and commitment to fight the scourge of violence against women and children beyond August and 16 Days of Activism. In our efforts to eliminate any form violence against women and children, our campaign must not only be limited to August month, but must be a year-long campaign. Such commitment and dedication should be carried out for 365 days until we collectively defeat the demon of patriarchy and gender stereotypes.

We have seen gender stereotypes by some men who don't believe that a woman can lead. It is the same stereotype that woman face at the workplace, every time a woman climbs a ladder he is accused of sleeping with powerful men.

As if women cannot lead without sleeping or being endorsed by men. The reality is that man cannot lead without being endorsed by a woman. We have more women than men in South Africa and more women go to vote as compared to men. We must never allow anyone to tell us that we not capable – we are ready to be led or to lead as women.

Our task is to support our women once they occupy the seats of power. We must not only focus our efforts on 2017 but we need to start planning for 2019 and beyond. After 2017, we will need to redouble our efforts and ensure that ANC wins 2019 elections.

As you gather as leaders during this Women's League Conference we wish you everything of the best, it is important for you to emerge from this conference stronger and united having established a clear programme of action and a new and fresh mandate from your members.

In closing, let me remind you what President Tambo said when he affirmed his confidence in women leadership where he said,

“We invite the Women's Section of the ANC and the black women of South Africa, more oppressed and more exploited than any section of the population, to take up this challenge and assume their proper role outside the kitchen among the fighting ranks of our movement and its command post.”

We are calling for women leadership at the COMMAND POST. We are ready – we are ready to be led by a women at the command position.

AMANDLA!