



SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STATEMENT

TO BE PRESENTED BY MINISTER BATHABILE DLAMINI

**63rd SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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Chairperson

South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered by Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Kenya on behalf of the African Group and by Namibia on behalf of SADC.

South Africa also takes this opportunity to express its gratitude on its election to serve as a Member of the Commission for the period 2019 to 2022. We promise to serve with integrity, transparency, openness and Ubuntu (meaning humility).

Chairperson

2019 marks a critical milestone for South Africa: 25 years since the country attained its freedom and democracy. This year on the 8th May, South Africa will be going for its sixth (6th) democratic elections with pride of having made strides in the areas of social security, accessible public services and sustainable infrastructure. South Africa is also celebrating the lives and times of its struggle heroines, Mama Albertina Sisulu, Mama Charlotte Maxeke and Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, who dedicated their lives to fight for the rights women are enjoying today.

Chairperson

We must at all times remember and celebrate the women before us who dedicated their lives to fight the struggles against poverty, patriarchy, abuse, violence and inadequate access to education, employment, healthcare, financial access and legal representation. Through their sacrifices today as women we own property rights, we vote, we occupy leadership positions, we have the right to work for equal pay and the right to access basic services such as water, electricity, housing, education and health care.

Chairperson

In 1994 the democratic government inherited an apartheid system where women were marginalised from political and decision-making positions, denied educational and economic opportunities, equitable health care and social services. However, the democratic government took deliberate actions to embark on socio-economic reforms to eliminate inequality and discrimination directed against women.

The South African constitution under the democratic government created an enabling environment for government

to enact laws, policies and legislation that are aligned to the Bill of Rights outlined in the Constitution. South Africa's Constitution is founded on the values of human dignity, equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms, non-racialism and non-sexism. In this regard, the democratic government was able to align and mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment principles into legislation, policies, programmes and practices.

The social protection programme in South Africa seeks to alleviate and reduce poverty, vulnerability, social exclusion and inequalities affecting mainly women and girls. In order to improve the lives and wellbeing of women and girls South Africa has in place the older persons grant, disability grant, child support grant, and social relief of distress.

Chairperson

As part of our social safety net, South Africa also has in place the Unemployment Insurance Fund to benefit retrenched workers, many of whom are women. In addition, South Africa recently introduced the National Minimum Wage to ensure that workers receive a decent income. This will make an important contribution to improving the lives of women workers.

Massive infrastructure programmes have improved access to basic services, quality education, public health care, housing, comprehensive social security and labour reforms. In this regard, unemployed women receive free healthcare services in clinics and hospitals, access to sexual offences courts, access to maintenance courts, Thuthuzela care centres and one-stop community centres.

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 children. South Africa is extending free tertiary education to learners from poor families, many of which are headed by women. This creates great relief for woman from financial burden of expensive education for their children.

Chairperson

We have rolled out shelters, care centres and victim empowerment services to support abused women and children. Our 24-hour Gender-Based Violence Command Centre provides country-wide, dedicated support and counselling to victims. South Africa has made inroads in eliminating the scourge of HIV and AIDS through the provision of free medication and was able to halve Aids deaths between 2002 and 2017.

South Africa is also 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 includes the expropriation of land without compensation.

South Africa also has in place government-funded social housing projects wherein government build houses for low income families. South African women are receiving free houses from this initiative.

I thank you