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Department of Public Works
North West Provincial Government
Republic of South Africa

**Address by Public Works MEC, Jerry Thibedi, during the internal
Women's Month Celebration held at Tusk Hotel, Mafikeng on
*Wednesday, August 22, 2007***

DATE: Thursday, 22 August 2007

- **Programme Director: Ms Pandora Hlakanye**
- **The Reverend: Pastor Fosu Amoa**
- **Head of Department (DDG): Mr Obakeng Mongale**
- **Provincial Service Commissioner: Mr S Mahlangu**
- **Chief Directors; Directors and Deputy Directors present**
- **Distinguished Guest**
- **Ladies and Gentleman**

Warm greetings go to all of you who have gathered here tonight.

It gives me great pleasure to address you on the occasion of our women's month celebration as the department of Public Works.

I am indeed very proud of the all employees of the Department.

I am grateful that you found it very necessary and fitting also , to find space and time in your tight work schedules, to command our women colleagues from the trenches in our four regions, to also be part of this important occasion.

The significance of our gathering here tonight cannot be over emphasized as we do so to add our voices in acknowledgement of the immense legacy of our heroines of the past.

As we pay tribute to the countless heroines who have made it possible for us to enjoy our freedom, include also, those who are still with us and continue to make their mark in building a better South Africa and a better world.

Forget not all our unsung heroines who by their words and deeds taught us the true meaning of courage, sacrifice and determination in pursuit of the noble goal of equality, freedom and justice for all.

Programme Director:

The year 1956 is perhaps a very long time ago for some of us gathered here. I will not take a chance here, to do a quick-check among the audience to find out how many of us here tonight, were born then?

However, looking around this magnificent banquet hall, my observations seem to confirm that 1956 may have been a long time ago, but the historic significance of the Women's March on the Union Buildings in Pretoria during August of the same year, will be revered and celebrated by generations to come.

We will therefore, year after year continue to pay tribute and salute the heroines of our struggle such as our own, Mme wa rona and Comrade Ruth Mompati who is also Mayor of Naledi Local Municipality in Vryburg.

The list of women, black and white, who led that historic march against the oppressive apartheid laws, who stood shoulder to shoulder against the twin evils of racism and sexism is endless.

We were indeed blessed to have such heroines of the struggle such as: Lillian Ngoyi; Florence Matomela; Rahima Moosa; Lily Diedericks; Helen Joseph; Victoria Mxenge and many others in the frontline.

Programme Director:

It is because of the involvement of that generation of women in the 1956 Women's March, in the struggle for the liberation of this country from the clutches of apartheid regime over many years:

That today, women are playing a central role in transforming our country into a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist society.

Those heroines and many others before them, believed in the possibility then, of a South Africa based on:

Non-racial; non-sexist; just and democratic ideals; freedom and equality.

It is because of the sacrifices of women leaders such as Mme Ruth Mompati that today, the role of women in all spheres of our lives:

Be it in areas of politics; civil service; business and civil society continue to increase.

Since the birth of democracy in 1994, the post apartheid government has prioritized women empowerment and a range of programmes and projects to improve the lives of women.

This very point was also amplified by our Premier, Comrade Edna Molewa during the provincial Women's Day celebration confirming that 50% of our mayors were women;

Of the 33 Members of the Provincial Legislature (MPL), 12 are women. Four out of 10 are in the Executive Committee.

The speaker of our legislature is a woman, Comrade Thandi Modise and four out of 11 chairpersons of portfolio committees are also women.

I am citing these examples, which quickly are references to all of us here to demonstrate that indeed women now occupy influential positions in the provincial government and play an important role in decision-making processes.

Speaking in Galeshewe, Kimberly on Women's Day, Honourable President Thabo Mbeki, summed it up when he said:

“...the collective determination of government to recognize women as critical players in our country has resulted in 40 % representation of women as national government ministers and deputy ministers.”

As we consolidate our political freedom and build the economy, we will continue to work to lift the yoke of women's oppression and ensure that women's emancipation is never left behind.

Together, government and communities alike will strive to ensure that women are able to participate fully in building a South Africa, which is prosperous with all the ingredients that represent the very essence of being human.

In conclusion: Programme Director;

When I was appointed MEC for this department in 2002, there was only one woman Director: Property, Ms Cathy Mokoma followed by the appointment of Dr. L K Sebegu as Head Of Department.

We have really moved on since then and currently we have five women as Directors in our department and there is room for more such appointments in the near future.

We have reason to celebrate Women's Month with great pride and joy. But what we should also ask ourselves as we cruise and navigate through challenges is what more can we do to ensure that the empowerment and emancipation of women becomes a reality.

We need to work as a collective and in partnership to implement programmes that would push back the frontiers of poverty and underdevelopment that characterise the lives of many of our women especially in the rural areas.

We need to fastrack programmes that will ensure that women take their rightful place in the economic sector and do away with whatever is aimed at marginalizing them.

I have been informed that tomorrow (Thursday) at the very same venue, the Department will be hosting an ``*Indaba With Women In Construction*``.

I am really encouraged by this initiative more so that were are fast approaching 2010 Fifa World Cup which we are hosting.

The once male-dominated construction industry has to be accessible to our women also. I will be very pleased to see women contractors involved in some of the major infrastructure development for 2010 and beyond.

Women empowerment cannot be selective.

It must be cascaded down to all fields of life and more importantly, it needs to be build on the solid foundations laid by the great women leaders of our people, some of whom we have come here to pay tribute to.

Malibongwe, igama lamakhosikazi.

Ke A Leboga

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