

**SPEECH BY MEC FOR PUBLIC WORKS, HON HOWARD YAWA, MPL
DELIVERED AT THE DIALOGUE WITH WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION
AT THE MAFIKENG HOTEL SCHOOL ON FRIDAY 4 AUGUST 2006**

Programme Directors

Pastor Kelebogile Gavin

Chairperson of the North West Chapter of SAWIC-Ms Thembi

Matabela

The Provincial Assistant Secretary General of NAFCOC-Ms Noko

Kgaffe

NABCAT Project Co-ordinator-Ms Vuyokazi Losi

The Technical Support Manager for Pretoria Portland Cement-Mr

Wayne Milligan

The Director Research, Monitoring and Evaluation in the

Department of Economic Development and Tourism-Mr Barry

Morkel

Departmental officials

Representatives of Women organisations in Business

Women Contractors

On the eve of the 50th Anniversary of the Women's March, my department is honoured to have hosted this historic engagement with women in the construction sector.

It is now indeed the time that the fundamental principles of equality, representivity, participation, and inclusivity that our Constitution espouses become fully entrenched in society because as our former President Nelson Mandela said, "Freedom

cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression."

We have achieved a lot in the last twelve years and this, hand in hand with the private sector through a partnership. As government we appreciate the positive cooperation we get from business and other private sector partners - we say thank you for lending a hand in the fight against poverty and other challenges for a better life.

In our programme of action we have identified poverty eradication, social cohesion, social justice and nation building as critical goals towards a truly non-racial, non-sexist and economically vibrant South Africa.

The ANC government believes that women are an indispensable part of any transformation process therefore it imperative to bring them to the centre of all developments.

As we all know, the second decade of democracy is characterised by strengthening the first economy and building the second economy. As government, we have gone further to provide a legal framework and a mechanism for all to operationalise this and other government programmes in the form of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Charter.

Within the framework of the Charter and the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act, my department has in the last financial year awarded bids to the value of R500, 780 million. 92% of the bids with a contract value of R460, 736 million were awarded to Historically Disadvantaged Individuals. The 260% increase in Black Economic Empowerment represents an age of hope for shared growth and development.

To give meaning to fundamental principles of equality, representivity, participation, and inclusivity enshrined in our constitution, we awarded 19% of bids with a contract value of R95, 149 million to 34 Women contractors.

The current boom in the property and building sector signals the beginning of a period of sustained growth, underscoring the centrality of the construction industry to the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA).

Driven by increasing public and private sector investment in infrastructure, the construction industry will need to more than double its output over the next ten years. Investment growth provides immense opportunities to increase the participation of women within the industry.

The biggest single challenge is to boost the skills and capacity of both the industry and the public sector to deliver the infrastructure that is pivotal to our country's development.

In partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry and the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), the National Department of Public Works has embarked on a process to develop an industrial strategy for the construction industry. The objective of developing the strategy is to position the industry as one of the growth industries in ASGISA.

As part of the recently launched Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), under ASGISA, the CIDB is also assisting the department to co-ordinate a study to determine the projected skills shortages and needs in the construction industry over the next 15 years. The initiative includes recruitment and training of unemployed people to meet the projected skills gaps over time.

Building on the commitments of the construction charter and our experience, the CIDB's focus on the development of registered black and women contractors provides a framework for targeted interventions to gear finance, training, mentoring, and appropriate information and management tools.

Contractor registration is already opening doors to support by banks and financial service providers as the industry moves into a more regulated environment. For example, National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency (NURCHA) now offers finance to all registered contractors on public sector projects, provided the tender is viable. I therefore wish to call to on unregistered women contractors to register with CIDB so as not to miss on opportunities for development

The department has also signed agreements with Standard Bank, FNB and ABSA to promote registered emerging contractors on school building projects and the building of health facilities.

The challenge facing us is to ensure that the partnership agreements are implemented and that emerging contractors realise the benefits of these agreements. We will in due course engage the banks to evaluate the effectiveness of their support programmes.

The women we have engaged on Projects have represented the womenfolk very well. None of their Projects were terminated due to non-performance. In them you have pioneers who are encouraging us to consider increasing the share of the cake for our women.

Although fronting has not been an issue, I wish to appeal to women contractors not to be tempted to venture into this despicable business practice, as it is an unacceptable market distortion, which undermines government's empowerment programmes.

We are confident that the partnership we have strengthened with women organisations in construction and women contractors through this dialogue will increase the participation of women in construction.

Our appreciation goes to Pretoria Portland Cement (PPC) for sponsoring this dialogue. The participation of PPC in this venture has cemented the company's partnership with my department. We hope that PPC would as per presentation by Mr Wayne Milligan, consider providing technical training and support to emerging women contractors in our province.

Ka a leboga.