

MEC FOR HEALTH: SASEKANI MANZINI'S SPEAKING NOTES TO THE WOMEN PARLIAMENT TO DELIVER PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS AND THE PREVIOUS HOUSE RESOLUTIONS

[Greetings and salutations]

Speaker, it is with utmost humbleness to acquire an opportunity to address the Women Parliament. The issues of women and women emancipation has been central to what we do, either at the government or at political level.

This Women Parliament recognises the important role that the Legislature can play to promote gender equality. The Legislature is the institution with the legitimacy and authority to resolve what may appear to be irreconcilable differences. The Legislature has this authority because it represents the diverse interests of the public.

We have sought to promote the achievement of equality, where nobody is discriminated on the grounds of race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin. We have sought to build a society that deliberate and confront the gender imbalances produced of the brutal political epoch overdrawn in 1994.

So far, we have spent August month by celebrating, debating and cultivating our common purpose-to bring warmth and humility to every encounter, to our homes and to the communities of Mpumalanga, which we serve tirelessly.

We continue to honour South African women for the role they have played in the struggle for national liberation, and to reflect on challenges women continue to face. As we celebrate our women, let us think about women who depend on seasonal economies for living like women working on farms. For them, their main concern is to earn a wage in order for them to be able to put food on the table for their families. Let us think of all women who are abused, raped and killed on daily bases, all in the name of love.

In its Gender Equality Report, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) says that:

"Any form of gender discrimination is a denial of human rights, an obstacle to human development. Gender mainstreaming means being deliberate in giving visibility and support to women's contributions and addressing the differential impact of strategies, policies, programmes and projects on women compared with men. It requires a focus on actual results in terms of gender equality in the practice areas at all levels."

The report continues to say:

"There are two complementary approaches to achieving gender equality: mainstreaming gender and promoting women's empowerment. Both are critical. Gender mainstreaming is 'the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, making women's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, so that women and men benefit equally'".

Madam Speaker violence against women remains a serious problem in South African society. The high incidence of rape cases, as well as other forms of physical and psychological abuse of women and girls, are evidence of this.

The tendency to relegate women to a subordinate position is pervasive and has been a feature of human societies throughout recorded history. Over relatively more recent years an array of international conventions, declarations and treaties that recognizes the rights of women have attempted to safeguard them from traditional and customary discriminatory practices.

In most countries in Africa and in South Africa too - ethnicity, class, religious interpretations, cultural norms and politics continue to define gender relations in favour of men. Gender relations shape women's access to resources and their work opportunities, and dictate the limits of what a woman may undertake at work, in the family or in public life.

The exclusion of women from legislative and decision-making bodies is not only a denial of human rights principles, but also a failure to appreciate the role women play in development of this country.

Speaker, this Women's Parliament is one of the hallmarks of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature. It provides a discussion platform that encourages women from different segments, from rural and urban areas, to participate in shaping the Province, keeping government in check to deepen democracy.

Unfortunate this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic we are unable to convene as we use to do. I hope our woman in the Province has joined using the virtual platforms and social media.

The Department has made significant progress in implementing developmental plans as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals and the National Development plans vision 2030 to advance issues of women and children. At the center of this is the need for the country to provide equitable Universal Health Coverage to all South Africans through the implementation of NHI and this will in-turn improve the quality of life by increasing life expectancy to at least 70 years.

Universal Health Coverage

The National Health Insurance (NHI) is here to stay and as a country, we are implementing the initiatives to ensure that our people get full Universal Health Coverage regardless of their socio-economic status.

We have a firm believe that the NHI will benefit more of our young people in the main and marginalized women in particular to ensure they are economically active.

Speaker, to highlight the progress made in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and the National Development Plan:

Chairperson, the increase in **life expectancy** has benefited women more than men, the women of our province are now living longer and their life expectancy has improved from 63.2 years in 2014 to 67.7 years in 2019, this is far higher when compared to 56.1 years in 2006. This is attributable to the efforts implemented at improving health outcomes aimed to increase the life of women and youth, such as:

- Less and less of our pregnant women die while giving birth- Maternal Mortality Ratio is at 67.1 per 100 000 live births which is below the planned target of 141 per 100 000 live births of 2019/20 financial year. Performance must be contained below 70 deaths per 100 000 live births to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and National Development Plan Vision 2030. However, one death of a mother is one death too many.
- Improvement in the Antenatal Care 1st visit before 20 weeks at 77.3% surpassing the planned target of 75%, while 92.7% of those who tested HIV positive in the Antenatal care programme were initiated on Antiretroviral treatment.
- The Mother to Child Transmission continues to be below the national target of 1% and currently 0.91% of babies' test HIV positive around 10 weeks.
- One million, six hundred and thirty nine thousand, one hundred and twenty one (1 639 121) HIV tests have been done since April 2019 to March 2020.
- 514 605 clients remain on the Antiretroviral treatment programme at the end of March 2020.
- 96.6% of children under 1 year were fully immunized surpassing the national norm of 90%.

Speaker, I must emphasize that when you improve a life of a women, you are improving the nation as a whole. Hence, as the Department we continue priorities appointment of women. To date, **xxxx%** of the total workforce of the Department are women and **xxxx%** of those are occupying senior management.

I must indicate it is also evident that the ANC-led government continues to prioritize women, our Premier is a woman, and there is women equity in her executive team. The Premier stated that she wants to see women climbing the higher management echelon of the Provincial Government by appointing more women to the HOD positions. The Department I, as a woman, leads has a woman HOD as well.