



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF  
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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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MINISTER OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND  
ADMINISTRATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH  
AFRICA**

**AT THE  
FIFTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
UNITED NATIONS  
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**Check against delivery**



Chairperson,

South Africa is honoured to deliver this statement at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women and aligns itself with the Statements of the Group of 77 and China and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). South Africa also reaffirms its commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action, as well as to the eight Millennium Development Goals.

The South African delegation also wishes to thank the Secretary General for his reports and the recommendations contained therein. South Africa furthermore congratulates the Secretary General on the vibrant launch of his Campaign to end violence against women. We fully identify with the “unite to end violence against women” Campaign and will continue “Blowing the Whistle on Violence against Women.” It resonates with several of the initiatives undertaken in South Africa to eradicate this scourge.

As South Africa enters its 15<sup>th</sup> year of democracy and prepares for its fourth general elections in 2009, our country is taking stock of the many accomplishments made and lessons learnt during this period.

South Africa has a progressive Constitution that realizes the vision of human rights and human dignity for all, pursuant through our steadfast belief in a non-sexist, non-racist, inclusive and democratic society.

The South African Government accords the highest priority to poverty eradication, productive employment, social integration, environmental regeneration, and the acceleration of economic growth. These are reflected in our National Development Plans and in our commitments in implementing international and regional instruments. We remain fully committed to advancing a developmental state with the key priority being socio-economic development and the creation of a better life for all. Social mobilization is an important vehicle to ensure that social justice is entrenched through the provision of adequate and relevant resources to drive the implementation of gender equality programmes.

As South Africa, we believe that this cannot be achieved unless there is substantive and sustained improvement in the status of women by their full inclusion in political life and at all decision-making levels, which opens economic opportunities for women. South Africa is committed to the AU parity target of 50 % women in decision-making positions.

In implementing “the people contract”, the President of South Africa, President Thabo Mbeki, has established a Presidential Working Group for Women (comprising of women from all sectors of society) which reports periodically on progress, achievements and challenges still facing women in South Africa. This has resulted in the establishment of the Women’s Economic Empowerment Fund which aims at improving access to finance for women.

South Africa endorses the current international debates that draw attention to the full spectrum of human vulnerabilities as they relate to women’s lack of access to and control of

resources, the impact of climate change, and the threat of conflict to the building of a sustainable peace on the continent and beyond.

We locate ourselves within these debates in a holistic manner – i.e. in a way that looks at issues pertaining to all persons, especially the socially excluded, the indigent who remain locked out of the mainstream economy and who nonetheless bear the brunt of conflict, poverty, and environmental degradation. In this regard, we foreground the faces of women who live in abject poverty in rural and peri-urban parts of our country. We portray such an image today simply because we believe that this image is our beacon of hope for a secure, sustainable livelihood in the future, as poverty bears the face of a woman.

South Africa therefore want all delegates to gaze through the lens of the woman who lives with the fear of her simple house burning down by accidental fires that consume not only her life but her entire neighbourhood, because she still uses the most rudimentary building materials and dangerous forms of energy for cooking and heating. The very geography of her limited space is in itself a fire hazard.

We highlight the plight of the girl child who is burdened with heading a household ravaged by HIV and AIDS, sacrificing her youth and education. We remind you of the women working in the informal sectors of the economy who sell their wares on street pavements. We bring you the image of the toiling women working in the family fields in the blazing sun, who do not receive any economic benefits for her efforts.

Environmentally based livelihoods in many rural areas are adversely affected by the impact of global climate change which is not only physical and economic in nature, but also social and cultural. Cognisant of these realities the South African government has through the provisioning of running water and the electrification of households, diminished long queues of women and young girls drawing water and collecting wood for fuel. We believe that while their lives remain marked by the indignities of poverty and marginalization compounded by climate change, there is hope for a better future tomorrow embedded within a progressive legislative framework, a nationally driven plan of action, and the appropriate institutional mechanisms to drive implementation.

Chairperson,

In South Africa women affected by poverty are taking control of their lives by designing creative strategies of addressing issues of development, sustainable livelihoods thus pushing back the frontiers of poverty, women like **Mrs. Tshepo Khumbane**<sup>1</sup>, from rural Limpopo province, have led us in using indigenous methods of environmentally sensitive approaches to development. She remains one of the stalwarts of this movement. We salute all these women, including those who live in the high density informal shanty towns.

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<sup>1</sup> She is an environmental activist running a project for food production and income generation that has gone beyond this to become a powerful intervention in terms of marginalization, self reliance and employment. She has devised a project that uses indigenous methods to trap water in an area where there is no running water at all. Focus is on sustainable livelihoods, indigenous systems using agriculture for creating jobs, eco-friendly environments. She symbolizes human development concept – looks ay peace, development and links it holistically to security of persons.

Women like these inspire us to create financing schemes and economic opportunities for women's empowerment, gender equality and development. They encourage us to fight for fiscal models both from our government and international partners that are aimed at providing secure livelihoods.

It is women like Mrs. Khumbane that should force us to work towards the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into international agreements on financing for development. They implore us to look at the possible ways of integrating the unpaid care economy into fiscal processes and fiscal considerations. They impress on us that gender machineries must be well resourced and women's organizations funded...

The South African delegation fully believes that social justice and social mobilization can only be achieved through critical partnerships between government, the private sector, non-governmental sector and civil society, and the manner in which these partnerships are articulated.

Chairperson,

South Africa appreciates the Secretary General's acknowledgement that not all countries are at the same level of progress on gender equality and women's empowerment and hence ongoing peer support by exchange of best practice should be encouraged.

We conclude with the words of Mr. Nelson Mandela, first democratically elected President of South Africa, in his State of the Nation Address to the first ever democratic Parliament on May 24, 1994:

Quote:" *Our endeavours must be about the liberation of the woman, the emancipation of the man and the liberty of the child....we must, constrained by, and yet regardless of the accumulated effect of our historical burdens, seize the time to define for ourselves what we want to make of our shared destiny...*"

I thank you

