

MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR MN MOKOENA, MPL, ON THE OCCASSION OF THE MPUMALANGA TWIB TECHNOGIRL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WORKSHOP, PROTEA BOULEVARD HOTEL, EMALAHLENI

15th October 2011

- **Programme Director – Ms Yvonne Nkosi**
- **Executive Mayor of Emalahleni Local Municipality Cllr S Sithole**
- **Hon Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Ms Elizabeth Thabethe**
- **Head of Department for the Department of Education, Ms Mahlasedi**
- **Head of Department for Dedet, Dr V Dlamini**
- **All the speakers scheduled to speak during the workshop**
- **Officials in the three spheres of Government**
- **Parents, educators and learners who are the central focus of this workshop**
- **Distinguished guests**
- **Ladies and gentleman**

Good morning, Sanibonani, Dumelang, Goie more!

I bring with me warm greetings from the Provincial Government, and wish to express our profound appreciation that we are part of this progressive and developmental programme aimed at encouraging girl learners to become future entrepreneurs in the field of technology and also to encourage them to enroll for the business related studies.

Programme director, let me start by wishing all learners well in their final exams, in all grades particularly 2011 Matric class. Some are already starting on Monday with practicals. We want our learners to remember at all times that the future of this province, South Africa, Africa and the world is in your hands.

As a Province we have resolved as a collective with you included through the MEC for Education u Mama Mhaule that in 2011 we are going to raise the bar of our matric results of 10% from **56.8%**, in other words we are not going to accept anything below 66,8%, this is our collective resolve and we are going to do it! Can you assure me that this commitment still stands?

I am certain that you are going to make your parents and Province proud, as I said not only in Grade12 but in all grades because education is the centre nerve of our theme for this

programme titled **“A girl today, a successful entrepreneur tomorrow.”**

You may as well know that 2011 marks the centenary of International women’s day, since its launch, in 1911, in Europe. The United Nations has chosen a theme for celebrating the centenary of the International women’s day this year titled **“Equal access to education, training and Science and Technology: Pathway to decent work for women”** a profound theme indeed as education is a prerequisite to shape, crystallise and bring our dreams into fruition.

Furthermore this theme connects to the ruling party’s commitment to address the challenges of gender inequalities in our democratic society.

The Government acknowledges that despite advances in Legislation, the majority of women in South Africa still suffer from gender inequality. Women have been at the receiving end of various forms of abuse and this has perpetuated inequality in the society characterized by environmental and social barriers, gender and cultural bias including stereotypes in the academic and business environment.

The Technogirl programme therefore asks fundamental questions:

- Why are there so few women scientists and engineers?
- Why so few women in science and technology?
- Why do we have a male dominated corporate leadership?

Research presents compelling evidence that a girl child has been hard hit by gender stereotypes to an extent that most of the girl children were denied basic rights to education, lack of access to mathematics, science and technology prohibited them from showing their skills and talents. They were unable to pursue certain career paths, and this has resulted in women being under represented in the formal economy and in corporate leadership positions.

The backward thinking of men is threatened when a woman occupies a position of influence, in fact many women have excelled when given a chance.

Woman acts of Courage:

- **Charlotte Maxeke** – Her political discourse in the liberation struggle is unparalleled.

- **Wangari Muta Maathai** – Kenyan International Environmental and political activist who served as an advisor to many world leaders on environmental and climate change issues.
- **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf** – The first elected female President in Africa in 2006
- **Rosalind Franklin** – She contributed a lot in the field of science, other scientists built on her work in understanding the structure of DNA.

Many women have Nobel Prizes in physics, chemistry, medicine and who says amongst you, we don't have future scientists and engineers, is it just because you are girls? A girl child is just as capable as a boy child. The key message therefore is, **Education** and **skills** are key **drivers** to **emancipation** and **empowerment** of women.

The low numbers of girl children in Science and Technology is inextricably linked to the overall socio-economic marginalization of women. And thus the Government of South Africa has given a moral and political high ground to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

We have institutionalised the gender mainstreaming machinery, with a Ministry for women, children and persons living with disabilities at the top. We have adopted the 50/50 gender equality at all levels of decision making. These measures although not adequate have broadened women participation in the economy and that is exactly what techno girl programme seeks to achieve.

The Provincial Government has put money aside for bursaries to learners who want to follow science and technology as a career path. We have also partnered with the private sector and parastatals such as Eskom who also have bursaries available for science, technology, engineering and business related studies. I can therefore put my head on the block that girl children who want to follow engineering, science and technology are going to be given priority provided they pass well. These collaborative efforts just like DTI and Cell C inherently seeks to strive for the expansion of opportunities for women in the economic and social space.

Most of you, just like me, come from challenging backgrounds, it is therefore very crucial that you work hard so that you rescue your families from the quagmire of poverty.

Community public private partnerships must ensure that skills development programmes focus on empowering women into careers that are still male dominated such as science, engineering and technology. The mentoring of girl children into these fields is going to be critical if we are to achieve this noble objective.

Institutions of higher learning also include FET's which must be repositioned and enroll more girl children to ensure massive quality production of artisans and technicians to mitigate the shortage of skills in our labour market.

Quite clearly, I want to conclude by indicating that the Mpumalanga Growth and Development Path has identified six (6) strategic economic sectors as main job drivers namely:

- Mining and energy;
- Agriculture and forestry;
- Tourism and cultural industries;
- Manufacturing;
- Green economy;
- ICT

Programme Director, if we are to make a significant impact in these strategic economic sectors we will require a more skilled workforce and more graduates in the fields of engineering, science and technology including business management studies and this Technogirl initiative is spot-on.

I would like to thank Cell C for their remarkable contribution in the empowerment of a child who is a girl today but a successful entrepreneur tomorrow. Thank you to the DTI for adhering to the fundamentals of a developmental state.

I believe that other entities both public and private will come on board to give a hand in redressing gross inequalities within society.

To all the learners who will be participating today, just remember the golden rule: you are **all winners** even if you don't progress to the next stage, go back and sharpen your entrepreneurial idea, one day! ONE DAY! Your vision will come to fruition, winners never quit. Your attitude determines your altitude!! If you have the right attitude the possibilities are endless...

I thank you!!