

INTERVIEW NOTES FOR THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MRS YN PHOSA, MPL ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

1. Why International Women's Day?

The International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8 every year, since 1975 under the banner of the United Nations, to recognise and acknowledge women's active participation and contribution in ensuring peace, security and social progress throughout the world. It is also intended to create awareness that women from all walks of life across the world have equal rights like their male counterparts.

From your own experience, you will recall that women in our communities, in our homes, are the foundations of peace and social progress.

In celebrating this day, our aim as women of the world, is to take a trip down memory lane to review the progress we have made towards our struggle for equality, peace and development in the world.

As women of South Africa and the world over, we believe that until we secure the full rights and full potential of women, lasting solutions to the world's most serious social, economic and political problems are unlikely to be found.

2. Progress made

- On a worldwide level, women's access to education and proper health care has increased;
- Their participation in the paid labour force has grown;
- Legislation that promises equal opportunities for women and respect for their human rights has been adopted in many countries. The world now has an ever-growing number of women participating in society as policy-makers.

3. Challenges still being experienced

- Women the world over still do not have equal rights as men
- The majority of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor people are women
- Women, on average, receive between 30 and 40 per cent less pay than men earn for the same work
- Women continue to be victims of violence, with rape and domestic violence listed as significant causes of disability and death among women of reproductive age worldwide. As women of South Africa, we detest any form of violence against women and girl children, and call on men to stop this barbaric and inhumane act.

4. Development of Women

- As South Africa, we have recognised women's extreme potential by nominating our former Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, as the first woman to head the African Union. Africa has concurred with us and she has finally ascended to the position of Chairperson of the African Union. This further strengthens our argument that women are king-makers in world peace and stability. She is doing a sterling job and representing the women of South Africa and Africa exceptionally well.
- Dr Dlamini-Zuma has called on member states to work together in addressing challenges affecting the continent, in order to achieve socio-economic growth
- She stressed that the empowerment of women remains critical in the advancement of the continent, stressing that in order to achieve the aim of the International Women's Day, African countries must channel more resources towards improving access to health, sanitation and water, and make child-bearing safer for women.

- She has further called on member states to implement regional and continental agreements that ensure more women are elevated into decision-making positions.
- When all these are achieved, as women of Africa, we could say with pride that we have achieved what the International Women's Day seek to achieve.

African Women's Decade: 2010-2020

- You will recall that the African Union launched the African Women's Decade (which started in 2010 and ends in 2020) on 10-15 October 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya, under the theme: ***"Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment."***
- The overarching objective of the event was to review, celebrate progress made so far towards gender equality and women's empowerment and to articulate concrete actions that should be taken to accelerate momentum in implementation and attainment of goals gender equality and women's empowerment adopted by the AU, which includes amongst others, attainment of Millennium Development Goals.

During this Women's Decade, we are focusing on:

- Creating awareness and mobilize continental support and political will in implementing the agreed international, regional and sub regional decisions and gender commitments;
- Re-invigorating the commitment to accelerate implementation on agreed global and regional commitments on the human rights perspective focusing on priorities such as education, health, agriculture, women's economic and political empowerment, gender based violence etc;

- Energizing the African women's movement with a focus on youth and grassroots women's leaders.

5. Violence against Women

Recent sporadic and spiralling acts of violence against women in our country are actually intended to detail the objectives of the International Women's Day. On a daily basis, women and girl-children are raped, maimed and killed.

The theme for the 2013 International Women's Day is *"A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against Women"*

We must therefore, as women of the world, stand up against this barbaric and inhumane abuse. **It is time for action to end violence against women.**

Happy International Women's Day for tomorrow!