

MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MRS YN PHOSA, MPL, DURING THE OCASSION OF WOMEN'S MONTH CELEBRATION AT THE NELSPRUIT CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Thursday, 15 August 2013

Programme Director;

Commissioner for Correctional Services in the Mpumalanga and Limpopo Region, Mr Andries Tsetsane;

Government officials present;

Distinguished guests;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

**Good Morning!**

I am indeed humbled and honoured, to have been given this opportunity to join you as we pay homage to *bo-Make* – the heroic women of our country and of our province. As we always say - *Wa thinta abafazi, wathint'imbokodo!* We meet here just over a month after we celebrated yet another iconic leader, the stalwart of our liberation struggle, former President *tat'u*Nelson Mandela. Although he remains in hospital, we must continue to pray for his good health, and continue to celebrate and honour him for his selfless contribution towards freedom. He remains deep in our hearts, and as women of note, we must continue to lead in prayers for his speedy recovery.

Madiba has fought for the rights of everyone, including women, has continued to stress that democracy will not be complete without participation of women.

**Nelson Mandela – Madiba – iSithwalwandwe – Seaparankwe – Ha a yo ya tshwanang le wena!**

Commissioner; Ladies and Gentlemen;

As we celebrate *a Centenary of Working together towards Sustainable Women Empowerment and Gender equality*, we must do so by continuing to recognise the role played by the women of 1956 towards our emancipation and freedom. We must do so by continuing to recognise the role women continue to play in building our nation and in strengthening social cohesion. Women are foundations of peace and social progress within our homes and communities.

Women continue to participate actively in ensuring peace, security and social progress throughout 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.

However despite all the successes we have attained as a democratic nation, indications are that women continue to experience social challenges and gender inequality. Some of these challenges are that:

- 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.

During this *Centenary of Working together towards Sustainable Women Empowerment and Gender equality* and the *African Women's Decade (2010-2020)* as declared by the United Nations, and celebrated under the theme: *"Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment,"* we must continue to focus on:

- Initiating programmes geared towards sustainable empowerment of women;
- Ensuring gender equality in all respects. Our country's progressive democratic Constitution enforces equality for all irrespective of gender;
- Ensuring the safety of our women and children. Let us continue to work together to ensure the end of violence against women and children. We must stand together and speak in one voice.
- **It is time for action to end abuse and violence against women.**

Commissioner Tsetsane; Ladies and Gentlemen;

I believe that all women who have been incarcerated in this correction facility, are not less women that all of us who are in the outside. I believe that they have realised their mistakes, hence they have accepted the punishment been given to them – a punishment meant to correct their mistakes and prepare them for integration back into society.

As we celebrate the *Centenary of Working together towards Sustainable Women Empowerment and Gender equality*, let us open our arms and hearts, and prepare to accept them back into our communities when they are released from here. I always believe that the first step towards correcting one's mistakes, is to accept and acknowledge those mistakes.

We still love you and will always do. As you leave this place, remember that you still have a positive role to play towards ensuring peace within your communities.

On behalf of the Premier and the people of Mpumalanga, I congratulate Commissioner Tsetsane and the Department for organising this event, to pay homage to women of yesterday, and the women of tomorrow who are currently within the confines of this correctional facility.

**Working together we can do more** to realise sustainable women empowerment and gender equality.

I wish you a fruitful celebration, filled with love and joy.

May the Almighty God bless this event and bless everyone gathered here this morning.

**I thank You!**