



REMARKS OF DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION, MR DAVID MAHLOBO ON OCCASION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CORPORATE SOCIAL INVESTMENT HANDOVER AT ALBERT FALLS DAM

29 AUGUST 2023

Programme Director

Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation- Hon. Judith Tshabalala

uMshwathi Local Municipality Mayor- Cllr M Zondi

uMshwathi Local Municipality Deputy Mayor- Cllr N Mdunge

Local Councillors

Umngeni- Uthukela Water Board Chairperson-

Msinsi Holdings Board Chairperson - Ms T Mhlongo

Msinsi Holdings Board Members

Msinsi Holdings Managing Director - Ms Mbali Ndlovu

Albert Falls Dam users and farmers

Members of the community present

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to extend my gratitude to be part of this august event, during this Women's Month, for I know that the task I have been given to stand in front and address you, as a man, is not an easy one. I pay my homage to all women gathered here, which is testimonial to the fact that the Women's March of 1956, was indeed, not vain.

As you will recall, In August 1956, over 20 000 women of all races a marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against, amongst others, the Urban Areas Act of 1950 amendments.

The 1956 March was symbolic in the sense that it brought to the fore the issue of equality and women standing up for themselves to fight what it is right for them.

We are gathered here today, 67 years since that watershed march which was one of the largest demonstrations staged in the country's history. It was underpinned by the adoption of the Women's Charter of 1954. And since the down of democracy, our government has made it as one of its key priorities to elevate policies and programmes

that are geared towards realising gender parity and women emancipation in all sectors of our society.

The month of August is dedicated to reminding us each year, that, until the issue of gender equality is addressed, this fight continues.

This year, Women's Month is being commemorated under the overarching theme: "***Accelerating socio-economic opportunities for empowerment of women.***" While our country has made numerous strides helping advance women, their full potential in our society is still to be realised.

The socio-economic empowerment of women in South Africa is about redressing the legacy of apartheid and the transformation of society, particularly the transformation of power relations between women, men, institutions and laws.

Through the Women's Month, as a society we are able to gauge how far we have come in transforming society, particularly the transformation of unequal power relations between women and men.

During this month, we also focus on addressing gender oppression, patriarchy, sexism, racism, ageism, structural oppression and creating a conducive environment which enables women to participate equally in the mainstream economy and take control of their lives.

The reality is that gender inequality still persists with more women than men mired in poverty and unemployment. The impacts of the cost-of-living crises, exclusion in economic activities and discrimination in certain sectors of industries on women remain glaring for us all to see. Gender bias continues to be a barrier in the transformation progress, yet they carry a disproportionate burden of responsibility when it comes to household and care-giving.

However, not because they are not capable, as we have witnessed women becoming agents of change and pioneering community development initiatives to uplift their communities, leading social innovations, campaigns on clean water and sanitation initiatives. Actually, it is women who have built communities we call ours today.

Programme Director:

This month of August, as it comes to an end, focuses on interventions that are being made across government, civil society and the private sector to develop women in our nation.

Particular focus for us as the Department of Water and Sanitation is on opportunities that women can access in the different field of our sector, including opportunities in the water resource management.

At the beginning of this Women's Month, Minister Senzo Mchunu directed the Department to make a paradigm shift in the approach to women empowerment programmes within the department. To have programmes that are programmatic and empowering with long term impact or outcomes.

He advised that the Department should come up with a programmes that will target particularly poor rural women.

This approach will facilitate empowerment of women and particularly those that are still without water and other opportunities.

So, in heeding the call, the department will align its programmes to provisions in the Gender Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing Framework which aims to ensure a more sustainable, comprehensive and multisectoral approach to gender mainstreaming. Mainstreaming should also be built into the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the public financing system. This will ensure sustained empowerment programme that is impactful and long term.

Programme Director:

The Department of Water and Sanitation is responsible for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6) which focuses on ensuring access to water and sanitation for all. Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene is the most basic human need for health and well-being.

However, the achievement of all the SDG 6 indicators does not rest on one individual or institution, but a joint effort, support and strengthened participation of local communities to improve water and sanitation management. The empowerment and involvement of women and girls into the integrated water resource management can facilitate general development of rural areas.

One of the challenges that is directly affecting young women from rural communities is critical skills shortage. This is directly contributing to unemployment of young women and constitute a greater percentage of the South African population. This result in their inability to take few job opportunities that are available in the water sector. These

challenges have necessitated a different thinking with regards to gainful employment and complete empowerment of the rural women by the Department.

As a department, we are resolute in lifelong empowerment of young people, particularly young women to access opportunities that were previously a dream.

We have a Unit we call the Learning Academy that provides bursaries to matriculants and those that would like to study in the water related fields. As we speak, we are currently funding over 200 young people, majority being young women, with bursaries in various universities in our country in order to give them a lifeline and a brighter future and a career in the sector.

It is thus befitting that as the Department of Water and Sanitation, we come and commemorate this day here with you and we support the initiative to involve rural women in the Water Resources Management space.

We are proud to be part of this event hosted by Msinsi Resorts and Game Reserves, a wholly-owned subsidiary of uMngeni-uThukela Water Board, that is being led and managed by women in the field of water resource management, as we find mostly men dominating in this sphere.

The company is responsible for managing about 12 of our dams under the water board as well as Darvill Waste Water Treatment Works. We have seen through the way these water resources infrastructure is being managed that have proven that they more than capable. They have demonstrated that all of us can be involved in looking after our water resources at the same time empower ourselves these resources. We therefore call on all the women in this community to seize the opportunity and get involved in the water resource management field and see how this can be of benefit to you as local communities.

In conclusion

We would like to thank the Msinsi Resorts and Game Reserves for this initiative, as empowerment of women is everyone's business and needs the support of all of us as government, business and civil society. Let us all work to remove the barriers which prevent women from entering and thriving in socio-economic opportunities, ownership of productive resources and entrepreneurships.

Women's participation in the economy of this country is an important measure of social and economic well-being.

It thus, as we accelerate women participation in the economy of our country, we say:

Wathint'imbokodo!

I thank you.