

**REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE MS NELISWA PEGGY
NKONYENI (MPL) DURING THE PROVINCIAL TREASURY'S
INTERNAL WOMEN'S DAY**

29 AUGUST 2022

Programme Director,

Head of Department, Ms Carol Coetzee;

Senior Management;

The entire staff of the Department;

Ladies good morning;

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to all who made it to today to participate in this programme which aims at giving a big push for women within this department to be granted an equal and full voice, participation and leadership everywhere and in every aspect.

I must say that I have been reinvigorated when I look at the scope and the theme of this event which is around issues of "Mental Health".

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is "a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community"

We are here therefore to elevate and awaken the conscience of many to the important role of women in our department, the financial sector and indeed in society as a whole in order for them to realise their full potential.

We all know that in the previous political dispensation, women were marginalised and prevented from taking their rightful places across the political, social and economic spectrum. It is against that background that our country has a very long and rich list of young and old women who have demonstrated exceptional bravery for the liberation not only of women, but also of the whole country. Many of these heroines paid an immense price which is their own lives for the total liberation of our country.

On 9 August 1956, thousands of brave women from all walks of life risked being targeted and arrested when united in a mass demonstration to the Union Buildings in Pretoria. They protested against the unjust pass laws enforced on South Africans especially women.

So as the department of Finance, we should produce and groom the Lilian Ngoyi's Helen Joseph's, Albertina Sisulu's, and Sophia Williams-De Bruyn's of today. It is doable and it's possible. It just requires commitment and willingness from all of us.

To help inspire us all to keep going in the fight to achieve equality and equal representation of women in society, allow me to quote words from a young lady from this beautiful province of KwaZulu-Natal, who has made an indelible mark locally and internationally, Nomzamo Mbatha who said;

“There can be no equal future without the full participation of all women and girls everywhere and this is the generation to accomplish that.”

And I believe that we are “that generation”, women need to be in the room and not be side-lined. Equality cannot be achieved if only one gender is making the decisions on behalf of everyone.

Many of the courageous women who led the march against the unjust apartheid pass laws did not live to see the fruits of their struggles and sacrifices. They were women who lived by faith and not by sight.

Although they did not live to experience this freedom that we are enjoying today, they saw it in their spiritual eyes and felt it in their hearts and veins, hence their relentless quest for the emancipation of this country from the bondage of apartheid, colonialism and all forms of systematic inequality and segregation.

We therefore view this session as a very strategic working session where we all come together under one roof to discuss and engage on possible and practical ways of implementing our adopted interventions and determining common purpose and unite behind that purpose. Gender transformation represents one of government's key priorities and is aimed at creating *a better life for all*.

We are saying the continued prejudice of any form or magnitude together with any reactionary attitudes by anybody that infringe and deny women their civic rights should not only be frowned upon but must be harshly acted against.

As MEC deployed to this Finance portfolio, I have been firm and will continue to remain firm, in order to ensure accelerated gender transformation through the appointment of more women to senior positions. These women should be casting aside stereotypes and be overcoming prejudices, in their quest to serve our province and the country.

I am pleased that a significant number of women are holding senior management positions in this department. In fact, I have learnt that we have reached the 50% target a while ago. As we speak, out of 472 employees of this department, 267 are female which equals to 57% that is a great stride. This is remarkable but I believe we can do better than this.

I am encouraged by the fact that issues of sexual harassments in the workplaces are also being discussed. We know that some women suffer in silence, may be for some reasons they know. But we need to break that silence and get them to speak out so that action can be taken against perpetrators. They must not be stuck in a situation from which they can and should have run away from, sooner than later.

So, as we discuss this, we must remember that it is an inclusive team that works collaboratively in government which can ensure that we serve the people of KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa with humility, dedication, and loyalty.

Remember, the enhanced service delivery to citizens solely depends upon a clean, accountable, efficient, and effective administration and good governance. We must always take a self-critical evaluation and decide how as the Provincial Treasury we can change the poor public perceptions about government.

As a public servant you must be concerned that corruption and maladministration continue to define government's work, more than the great service delivery achievements.

As women in this department, we must continue to work hard to ensure that this department continue shine and be exemplary, even in ensuring that we continue to receive clean audits from the Auditor-General. I believe we are capable of achieve that as long we can strive to achieve more.

We applaud the recent decision by the ANC in this province for deploying Honourable Nomusa Dube-Ncube as the first female Premier. What is also noteworthy is that the entire Executive Council is made up of 60% of women representatives which is a milestone.

We see this as a step forward in addressing patriarchy, and it will definitely go a long way in support of government's strategies to address inequality, poverty, unemployment, and gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF).

As I conclude Programme Director, it is my utmost hope that this exercise will strengthen relationships and communication amongst you, as staff members of our department.

Finally, I take this opportunity to salute all women present here today, for the role you have played, and the contribution you have made and continue to make, recognised or not, towards the growth and development of our nation and our beautiful province of KwaZulu-Natal.

The struggle towards a non-sexist and democratic South Africa is and should be an ongoing exercise.

'Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo!

You Strike a woman, You Strike a Rock!

I thank you.