

**INPUT BY HON S E LUCAS, DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE HIGH LEVEL SESSION ON FEMICIDE:**

29 July 2020

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of Parliament

The Statistician General

Commission for Gender Equality

Professor Mathews

Professor Jewkes

Advocate Magano

Advocate Nichols

Violence against women was institutionally recognised at the very first United Nations World Conference on women, held in Mexico in 1975. The agenda focused on improving gender equality and ending discrimination.

This led to the drafting of what became the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination. This further led to the drafting of what became the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEWAD), which was adopted by the United Nations in 1979.

Violence, however, was specifically not included, as many still considered violence against women to be a private matter rather than a concern of the state.

At the second United Nations Conference on women, held in Copenhagen in 1980, delegates had begun to recognize that there were discrepancies between the rights

accorded to women in the convention and the ability of women to actually exercise these rights.

At the Copenhagen conference, a resolution was adopted on battered women and violence in the family. For the first time, violence in the home was specifically acknowledged by the organisation.

It was only at the United Nations Conference on women, held in Nairobi in 1985, that violence against women, in those specific terms, was recognised as an obstacle to achieving the stated objectives of equality, development, and peace.

The implementation of the 1985 resolution included the 1986 Expert Group Meeting on Violence in the family, with special emphasis on its effects on women. This meeting adopted concrete recommendations with regard to legal reform, police, prosecutor, health sector training, social as well as resource support for victims. It also made it clear that domestic violence was a global phenomenon, which was significantly underreported.

Distinguished Guests

Within the borders of our region, the SADC regional documents clearly affirm the principles of women empowerment and gender equality and further recognises the prevention and reduction of Gender Based Violence as a catalyst for attaining an environment that is conducive for peace and security.

The revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development identifies Gender Based Violence as an area of concern and proposes several approaches to addressing this pandemic.

The revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development provides for the empowerment of women, elimination of discrimination and attainment of gender equality through enactment of gender-responsive legislation and implementation of policies, programmes and projects.

The Protocol was revised in 2016 to align with the provision of other instruments such as Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063 and the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2015 – 2063.

Honourable Members

The women's struggle has gone through many phases and evolutionary processes and during those phases, women have reasonably been optimistic, that the adoption of these many laws and legislations will once and for all, deal with the scourge of femicide.

However, South Africa has over the last few years and months, cumulatively experienced an intensified onslaught of gender based violence and femicide, where women and girl children have lost their lives through brutal and atrocious acts of violence. The killings of women have now become more brutal in nature, as killers show a blatant disregard for human rights and the rule of law.

Today, South Africa has one of the highest murder rates in the world (the fifth highest according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, using 2015 data). Within that, we also have a femicide rate that is five to six times the world average, depending on the year.

Gender Based Violence and Femicide has increasingly received national and international attention. Accompanied by urgent calls for stringent measures to mitigate against this social ill. It is therefore pertinent that Parliament as an activist and people centred parliament, robustly engages on intensifying the fight against femicide.

When a woman is killed she is most likely to be murdered by an intimate partner. Intimate femicide is a complex phenomenon with a 'web' of associated and mediating factors which all contribute to its excessive levels in South Africa. It further shows that intimate femicide is an extension of intimate partner violence and as such has to take into account, the unequal gender relations in society.

As a means to respond to this societal scourge, Parliament hosted its first Women's Parliament of the Sixth dispensation in August 2019. One of the priority items for discussion during the 2019, Women's Parliament was the entrenched scourge of Gender Based Violence and Femicide.

The 2019 Women's Parliament was also preceded by a National Summit against gender-based violence and femicide. This summit was also a platform where his Excellency President Ramaphosa made a commitment to develop a responsive action plan to address issues of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide.

In September 2019, the President, called for an urgent joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament, to deliberate on the state of Gender Based Violence Plan and to further strategize on what the appropriate response plan should entail, to address the scourge of Gender Based Violence and Femicide.

Today, we are here to give effect to a resolution of the 2019 Women's Parliament, where women called on Parliament to urgently enact legislation, to specifically deal with the scourge of Femicide.

We are also here today, to solicit the views and expertise of strategic minds, in order to give guidance on the formulation of a piece of legislation, specifically crafted for the scourge of femicide.

This is also in line with our resolve to ensure a Zero Tolerance Legislative Framework for crimes of femicide, in order to ensure that perpetrators are decisively dealt with, through clearly stipulated provisions in the law.

Conclusion

A report will be compiled on today's deliberations, which will further be debated, together with the Peace and Security Cluster. Furthermore, insights shared today, will also be used to inform our deliberations, as we advance to ensure that the 2019 Women's Parliament Resolution, to enact legislation for femicide, is accordingly implemented.

It is my sincere hope, that today's deliberations will bring us closer to ending to scourge of Femicide. We can only win this fight, if the rule of law is appropriately shaped, to adequately respond to the grave challenges we face.

Thank you