

OPENING REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES, HONOURABLE S E LUCAS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE FREE STATE WOMEN'S CHARTER REPORT BACK SESSION

Venue: Simon Sefuthi Hall

Date: 11 November 2022

Time: 10h00

Premier of Free State Province

Deputy Speaker, Free State Provincial Legislature

Members of the Executive Council of the Free State Province.

Members of Parliament

Members of the Provincial Legislature of Free State Province

Executive Mayors and Councillors

Representatives of Chapter Nine Institutions

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentleman

The core factors deepening gender inequality, is the patriarchal ideology that places women in a subordinate position in relation to men. An important practical manifestation of the patriarchal social ideology is women's limited access to economic empowerment.

Lack of gender mainstreaming and women empowerment as an approach has resulted in the perpetuation of gender inequality, while equity has been more about numbers, rather than transformation through mainstreaming as a mechanism towards gender equality.

It is also important to indicate that there has been a fairly weak translation of gender equality commitments into fiscal commitments given that the strategies of departments show little evidence of the manner in which strategic planning processes and budgets have been re-purposed for gender mainstreaming.

The Gender discourse, has been mainly event driven where women's Month and the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children Campaign, have been budgeted for with limited institutionalisation of initiatives throughout the year.

Honourable Members

it is important to emphasize that the status of women is not merely a statistical matter, as poverty for women is often more severe and poses greater development challenges for the country.

When women are poor, their rights are not protected and they face double discrimination, on account of their gender and economic situation.

If the state machinery fails to effectively respond to the cynical and generational nature of the prevailing challenges faced by women, the disproportional impact of multi-dimensional poverty, economic exclusion, gender based violence and femicide will continue to impede tangible advancement to realize substantive equality.

As an organ of people's power and people's voices, Parliament is now, particularly hard pressed to ensure that it embodies the ideals of an activist Parliament.

This it must strive to achieve in a manner that demonstrates an understanding of the day to day pressures faced by countless South African women, therefore, seeking to reverse the far reaching impact of patriarchy. Parliament is well positioned to ensure that it employs the constitutional and legislative instruments at its disposal to ensure greater impact.

Distinguished Guests

We have already started to employ the constitution and legislative instruments to ensure greater impact. During the 2019 Women's Parliament, South African Women across all nine provinces asserted the imperative for Parliament to review the 1994 Women's Charter for Effective Equality.

Parliament has successfully completed its nation-wide 25 years Review of the 1994 Women's Charter for Effective Equality.

The Women's Charter for Accelerated Development (2021) therefore represents the third strata of gender transformation manuscripts in South Africa's history.

The 25-Year Review intentionally leaned towards assessing the state's internal arrangements, institutional processes, development policies and institutional and systematic arrangements.

The review engagements have explicitly exposed the glaring gaps between policy and practice and the disjuncture between public endorsement of gender equality and actual institutional practice, which is also characterised by the state's inadequate response to give effect to the women's rights regime, in the first 25 years of our democracy.

According to the report tabled by Statistics South Africa during the high-level report session, Parliament was informed that 1,8% of women who are (16 years and above) in Free State, are slightly more than the national average, in relation to being victims of assault.

The Commission for Gender Equality made a submission, that majority of municipalities in the province had no signed Employment Equity Plans as stipulated in section 20 of the Employment Equity Act.

The review process has also exposed how institutions charged with the responsibility to advance gender mainstreaming are no longer appropriately designed, capacitated and managed.

Through the country wide, provincial, metro and district level review engagements, Parliament was able to gather valuable information and findings, which have become the basis upon which, sustained engagement with, provinces, metros and districts will now continue to be based upon, particularly for the advancement of gender equality, through the various oversight mechanisms necessary.

During our country-wide review process, no province was found to have an articulated Theory of Change embedded on women's empowerment principles and gender equality prescripts.

We realised that some of these challenges can be associated with the lack of mechanisms to institutionalise gender through the Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (PGDS) of the provinces. Out of all 9 (nine) sampled Provinces none had a PGDS underpinned by gender responsive planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation and gender auditing (GRPBM&E & A).

Honourable Members

the women of South Africa demand of us to be resolute in our commitment to re-engineer systematic and institutional arrangements across the three spheres of government, to enable gender sensitive good governance, policy-redesign, planning, budgeting and implementation practices to take place in earnest.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and an essential prerequisite for achieving a gender equitable society. Legislative change

must be accompanied not only by policy measures that promote this Constitutional principle, but they should result in the implementation of gender equity across all society.

Conclusion

A Nigerian Poet Ben Okri once said, 'We have not yet arrived, but every point at which we stop requires a redefinition of our destination'. As an activist Parliament, we need to appreciate the objective and subjective factors which are likely to impede the advancement of our gender transformation discourse on an ongoing basis, in order to devise pertinent ways and means of achieving our goal which is equality amongst sexes.

We continue to distinguish between what has changed and what remains unchanged with regard to the transformation of gender roles in society, bearing in mind that the basic framework of our democratic achievement in South Africa is irreversible, but it can be derailed leaving us with a shell of political rights without real social content.

We are here today to track progress made in implementing the executive commitments made during the Free State Women's Charter review processes.

We are here to enhance individual accountability amongst the spheres of government, in order to accelerate the realisation of gender equality.

We are here to share best practices and also to strengthen joint integrated planning amongst the spheres of government, in order to accelerate the empowerment of women.

Thank You