

**SPEECH FOR THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:  
INDUCTION OF NEW COMMISSION FOR GENDER EQUALITY  
COMMISSIONERS  
19 JUNE 2012  
SOUTHERN SUN HOTEL  
OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

Chairperson of the Commission for Gender Equality

Commissioners

Invited Guests

Officials of the CGE

It is an honor for me to say a few words on this important occasion.

In essence, the role of the Commission is to safeguard *gender* equality, with an equal emphasis on the status and well-being of both men and women. In our country, there is a great need to correct imbalances in respect of the treatment of *women*, in particular.

South African women experience deeply entrenched and overlapping forms of oppression, with a result that they suffer unfair discrimination in almost every aspect of human endeavour. While much has been done since the advent of democracy to address structural gender inequalities by way of legislation, discrimination on the grounds of gender remains a reality for many South African women.

The constitutional drafters realized the critical need to establish a separate body to deal with the distinctive needs of women in South Africa, and to prevent the marginalisation of those concerns closely associated with the lives of women. It was envisaged that the creation of a Commission for Gender Equality would facilitate increased public participation to influence government policy. It would also promote state accountability with a view to achieving substantive gender equality.

Today, we welcome nine new Commissioners to lead this vital organization: Chairperson Mfanozelwe Shoji, Commissioners Thoko Mpumlwana, Janine Hicks, Sylvia Desiree Stevens-Maziya, Wallace Amos Mgoqi, Ndileka Eumera Portia Loyilane, Nondumiso Maphazi Ranuga, Lulama Nare and Amanda Gouws. This particular group of Commissioners consists of men and women of vast experience in different fields and we are convinced that the combination of your experiences and expertise will enrich the CGE.

While the CGE has to report to Parliament on their activities and the performance of their functions, we recognise its constitutional independence as an institution supporting democracy. As Parliament we also acknowledge our constitutional obligation to assist and protect the CGE to ensure its independence, impartiality, dignity and effectiveness. Furthermore, we recognise that the CGE has an important complimentary oversight role to play to enhance the oversight of Parliament, amongst others by submitting investigative reports on women empowerment and gender equality issues.

Commissioners,

The CGE has in the past been challenged by internal weaknesses and issues of non-compliance. While we recognize the corrective work that has already been done by the Commission in this regard, we have high expectations that you will address the remaining operational challenges, strengthen financial control and continue to successfully implement a turnaround strategy to enable the Commission to successfully execute its constitutional mandate. In the past we have also witnessed chronic conflicts among Commissioners as well as conflicts between Commissioners and staff. We are confident that your experience, skills and leadership capabilities in a wide range of fields will prevent these from happening again.

We urge you to attain the strategic objectives of the Commission of:

- ensuring the creation and implementation of an enabling legislative framework that promotes the attainment of gender equality;
- protecting and promoting gender equality by engaging with relevant stakeholders to educate and raise awareness on issues of gender

equality; challenge patriarchal perceptions and stereotypes and take action against infringements of gender rights through the implementation of appropriate redress.

- monitoring state compliance with regional and international obligations, relating to the mandate of the Commission; and
- building an effective, efficient and sustainable institution that will fulfil its constitutional mandate on gender equality.

Your commitment is also sought to the implementation of the resolutions of the National Assembly on the Reports of the Auditor-General and Public Protector on the CGE Forensic Investigations, adopted on 23 June 2011. These include the incorporation of the recommendations of the Public Protector and the Auditor-General into the turnaround strategy of the CGE and the submission of quarterly progress reports to the National Assembly. Further, that a policy guiding relations between Commissioners and the Secretariat be clarified and vacant positions within management be filled without delay.

We trust that you will find a way of establishing a strong working relationship with the Department of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities. Finally, we urge you to increase public awareness and visibility on Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Issues.

Commissioners,

As you may recall, the National Assembly in 2006 appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to review chapter nine and associated institutions. The Committee submitted a Report to the National Assembly in 2007. The NA considered the Report in 2008 and resolved to adopt one recommendation only, namely the establishment of a Unit on Constitutional Institutions and Statutory Bodies. The rest of the Report was placed in abeyance for consideration by the Fourth Parliament, which is the present Parliament. It is envisaged that many of the issues raised by the Committee, including the issue of the possible amalgamation of human rights related institutions, will be considered when the report is re-tabled for consideration by the House.

The Office on Institutions Supporting Democracy (OISD) has been created with the specific intent to strengthen relationships between ISDs and Parliament. This Office could provide vital support to the CGE and it is hoped that the newly elected Commissioners will work closely with this Office.

We encourage your current focus on gender transformation in the workplace, which highlight the inadequate promotion of women with disabilities and the need for the realisation of gender equality and women empowerment in the workplace. We further support your focus on the themes of gender and poverty; gender based violence; democracy and good governance; gender, culture, religion and tradition; HIV/AIDS and the National Gender Machinery.

We urge you to take the opportunity to engage in a sustained and effective manner with the policies, approaches and available mechanisms to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and to promote gender issues in South Africa.

I Thank You