



ADDRESS BY HONOURABLE MINISTER SINDISIWE CHIKUNGA

Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

At the P20 Women's Parliament 2025

Minister's Session Theme: *Advancing Gender Equality through Effective Gender Mainstreaming and Coordination*

Date: 13–14 August 2025 | **Time:** 08h30 – 17h00

Venue: NCOP Chamber, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, Cape Town

- Honourable Thoko Didiza, Speaker of the National Assembly;
- Honourable Mtsweni-Tsipane, Chairperson of the NCOP;
- His Excellency, Deputy President Paul Mashatile;
- Honourable Members of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures;
- Leaders from government, civil society, organised labour, faith-based, traditional, academic organisations, and the private sector;
- Distinguished guests,

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Honourable Speaker, I am deeply honoured by your kind invitation and grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the 2025 Women's Parliament.

We are humbled that, once again, you have found it fitting for us—across the political spectrum—to come together to reflect on, commemorate, and honour the past, present, and future

generations of women at home, across the continent, and around the world.

Here at home, the year 2025 marks several memorable milestones in our country's rich heritage and struggle for women's emancipation, empowerment, and gender equality. It marks 30 years since the adoption of the historic Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 and 70 years since the adoption of the *Freedom Charter*. Most notably, we are just a year shy of commemorating the 70th anniversary of the historic Women's March of 1956.

2. THE URGENT NEED TO PRESERVE THE LEGACY

And so, this Women's Month, we take a moment to honour gallant heroines such as Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, Charlotte Maxeke, Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, Nokuthula Orela Simelane, Happy Joyce Mashaba, and the many others whose sacrifices nurtured the tree of our freedom.

Remember, in our first democratic Parliament in 1994, trailblazers like Frene Ginwala, Baleka Mbete, Albertina Sisulu, Gertrude Shope, and Thoko Didiza began dismantling centuries of exclusion, proving that women's leadership could shape the legislative agenda.

The work to preserve this legacy must begin now so that, in the coming year, we can showcase and celebrate it with the reverence it deserves. Decades from now, future generations must inherit the knowledge that they are the descendants of women whose extraordinary courage, strategic foresight, and fearless leadership brought down one of history's most brutal systems of oppression, the apartheid system.

3. WHERE WE WERE IN 1995 - THE LEGACY OF BEIJING

Honourable Speaker,

Women have come a long way. **Our reality has been shaped by centuries of structural inequality, economic exclusion, and systemic violence.** We remain concentrated on the margins of political, economic, and social power. Our contributions through the care economy remain structurally **undervalued and underpaid.**

Informal economies have become the lifeline for millions of women, yet policies neither recognise nor protect women working in these sectors. Land tenure systems continue to privilege men, while women's access to productive assets—land, credit, and technology—is curtailed by both patriarchal norms and state policies that disregard gendered realities. **For far too long, violence** against women and girls has remained pervasive, normalised, and inadequately addressed. **As the digital, divide** further compounds this exclusion: women in rural and farming communities lack access to media technologies and are thus shut out of critical political debates and information flows.

4. SOUTH AFRICA'S PROGRESS SINCE 1994 AND CURRENT INITIATIVES

Honourable Speaker, despite the setbacks we have identified at national, regional and global level, our country has made significant strides since the dawn of our democracy.

A. With regard to **meaningful representation** in decision-making and law-making structures, today, women make up 43.5% of our Parliament—an increase from 28% representation in 1994—and 43% of the Executive, up from

only three women in 1994. As of February 2023, 45% of our 253 judges are women, up from only two women in 1994.

B. Strong Institutional Mechanisms and National Action

Plans on GBV: In line with our *National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF)*, our President recently signed into law the *Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Act* to underscore our whole-of-society effort to prevent, eliminate, and respond to violence against all women and girls in all its forms and manifestations—in public and private spaces, online and offline. We have also completed a national GBVF prevalence study to ensure that our current and future interventions are based on sound evidence.

C. Our country has also surpassed **gender parity in higher education participation rates** - over 60% of graduates from our colleges and universities are women.

D. Through our **Chairship of the G20 Ministerial Working Group** on the Empowerment of Women, we are shining the spotlight on the care economy, promoting financial inclusion through preferential public procurement for women-owned enterprises, and ensuring that women have access to land and related productive assets and economic opportunities.

We have come a long way, yet we remain very far from where we should be.

5. MTDP AND G20 PRIORITIES - BUILDING RESILIENT ECONOMIES FOR ALL

Over the years, scholars have correctly argued that a resilient economy is one that can withstand, adapt to, and recover from various shocks and stresses while maintaining its core functions and capacity for growth inclusively. Going forward, guided by the MTDP, we will pursue the following priorities

A. Leveraging Public Procurement and the Transformation Fund for Women's Economic Empowerment.

Women of our country can look forward to a transforming economy where their participation is significantly expanded and ownership of economic assets is increasingly equitable. By 2029, at least half of all active registered enterprises must be owned by women, and , as a matter of law, 40% of public procurement spending must be directed to women-owned businesses.

To this end, we have conceptualised a series of Emerging Industrialists Apprenticeship Programmes, through which participating emerging industrialists—particularly young women—will work alongside experienced industry associations, receiving support from ideation through to product development, financing, market access, and commercialisation pathways. **We recently met with Minister Tau in order to align these interventions with the** R20 billion-a-year Transformation Fund announced by the President.

B. Empowering Women through Agricultural Value-Chains

We have also partnered with the CSIR to create a value-chain-driven Agricultural Cooperatives Model that leverages CSIR's intellectual property and advanced technologies, including

precision agriculture, to equip and prepare emerging women farmers for market success.

We are also finalising Memorandums of Understanding with SOEs and other stakeholders to give effect to their commitment to lease land, properties, workshops, factories, and other facilities to support our tangible projects aimed at empowering women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

We also aim to **modernise and build the capacity of women-owned businesses** and make sure they produce, supply and distribute the best quality of goods and services. This means access to the latest manufacturing technologies and production equipment. In highly regulated sectors, we need to find ways to simplify the certification process and provide assistance with obtaining certifications needed to bid for public contracts.

C. Gender Responsive Land Reform and Asset Redistribution

Over the next five years, we will continue to support the implementation of comprehensive land reform policies that guarantee women's equal rights to land ownership, inheritance, and control. However, land alone will not build resilient local economies. Therefore, our land reform efforts must continue to be accompanied by financing mechanisms that enable women to turn the land into productive and income generating assets.

We have recently met with the Minister of Land Reform in this regard.

D. Transforming the Care Economy into an Engine and Resilient Economy

We will continue to rely on the leadership of the Multi-Party Women's Caucus and the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, so that **gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting, and women's inclusion** are visible in every Portfolio Committee. Whether in finance, trade, policing, health, education, or infrastructure.

Honourable Speaker, one of Africa's finest sons reminded the world that:

"Nothing whole, nothing definitive or lasting could be accomplished... as long as women are kept in condition of subjugation, a condition imposed in the course of centuries by various systems of exploitation... You are our mothers, life companions, our comrades in struggle and because of this fact you should by right affirm yourselves as equal partners in the joyful victory feasts of the revolution." - Thomas Sankara.

Aluta Continua!

Let women's parliament be the heartbeat of national accountability

We have come a long way, but the struggle continues.

I thank you.