



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT THEMBENI KAMADLOPHA-MTHETHWA'S REMARKS DURING THE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT DEBATE

GREETINGS

The Honourable Speaker and the Deputy Speaker All the Honourable members in the house

LOCATION: KWAZULU-NATAL LEGISLATURE, PIETERMARITZBURG

DATE: 29 NOVEMBER 2024

I was fortunate enough to accompany the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, the Honourable Thamsanqa Ntuli at the prelude of the launch of the province's 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign at Estcourt Thuthuzela Care Centre, where one bore testimony of harsh realities of the women and child abuse at the hands of a male person who abused the little girl just because of her gender and age. An elderly woman who could barely walk had brought into the facility her granddaughter, who was a rape survivor. A 9-year-old girl whose life had been threatened with, whose rights have been violated, is now faced with this trauma every day.

Furthermore, women are often the face of poverty in South Africa. They're the survivors of rape and victims of gender-based violence and femicide. Women still face exploitation at their workplaces. Women are the highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS.

It is against this backdrop that women empowerment needs to be realised in a true sense of the word. When we say 'a playing field need to be leveled' it's because of these injustices and discriminatory practices that still persist in our societies, that women's rights too are essential for fairness, opportunities, equality and social justice. Women need to be empowered.

Talking of empowerment, although everyone agrees that women still have a long way to go to catch up with their counterparts, strides are being made by the Government of Provincial Unity or GPU to level the playing field with notable initiatives that are budgeted for and ringfenced financial resources toward women emancipation and development. When we criss-crossed the districts of South Africa during the election campaign we committed ourselves to championing the interests of women and children.

To this end the Government of Provincial Unity led by the IFP alongside the ANC, the DA and the NFP, has established tailor-made women programmes aimed at confronting challenges they face and promoting their development, gender equality, economic empowerment, sustainable agriculture and food security programmes as well as leadership development and capacity building programmes.



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In my department - Agriculture and Rural Development - women feel rejuvenated because of the progressive programmes we have put in place. They have warmed up to the idea of Phezukomkhono Female Awards we have established in recognition of the role played by women in the agricultural sector. A sizeable number of women are taking up this initiative, and they will be rewarded for their efforts as part of making KwaZulu-Natal green with crops and vegetables. Female farmers will be rewarded handsomely for their efforts. And as I have alluded to in my budget vote in mid-August in the current financial year, through various programmes of the department and initiatives supported through other agricultural sector sources, approximately 4 821 women, 1 492 youth, and 81 disabled people are supported and will be supported. It is important that at the centre of all our development efforts, we put women, in particular rural women, at the top of the priority list.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

To ease challenges faced by women in various sectors, the Women's Parliament sitting in uKhahlamba Municipality in August noted that women involved in the fishing industry do not have permits. It was resolved that the department should raise awareness about the importance of fishing licenses so that fishers are aware of the importance of permits and be assisted in acquiring licenses. The parliament sitting also noted that some districts have not appointed Agricultural Advisors (extension officers) within their districts and it was resolved that the department of Agriculture and Rural Development to prioritize hiring agricultural advisors (extension officers) in districts facing a shortage.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Commission on the Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, noted that people especially women from rural areas and townships lack information on how to access funding and business opportunities from EDTEA and their public entities. It was resolved that EDTEA was required to disseminate information about funding and business opportunities to rural and township areas. Another cry from the Women's Parliament sitting directed to EDTEA was that it had allocated very few projects in uMkhanyakude District as opposed to other districts. Moreover, district offices are non-functional and do not assist locals, and this was resolved that the department should fairly distribute projects and funding across all districts.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

For the Department of Social Development, it was found that there was severe shortage of Thuthuzela Care Centres in the Province; and as a result, survivors of rape and sexual abuse end up traveling long distances to access this service, which is time-consuming and costly, and it was resolved to call for the establishment of Thuthuzela Care Centres in all districts to improve access and address cases of gender-based violence and femicide. To call on the government to allocate more financial and human resources to the SAPS crime prevention unit.



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COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS

The Women's Parliament sitting also noted with concerns that many districts in the province are experiencing water supply challenges as municipalities do not dispatch water tankers to all areas regularly and timeously; and that women are mostly affected by this challenge. This setback was resolved to call on the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) to conduct a random audit of water supply challenges in the province; and to call on municipalities to communicate schedules of water tankers delivering water to communities timeously.

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

I am particularly happy with the Office of the Premier led by the IFP Chairperson in KwaZulu-Natal, Honourable Thami Ntuli for leading the province through from the troubled waters and for guiding us toward toward the right direction. Through your impeccable leadership, we have seen more than 45 600 women empowered, including those who are survivors of GBV and F to prevent dependency on the perpetrator. Through your leadership Premier, we witnessed a total of 52 693 of vulnerable groups assisted with social relief of distress. Your dedication to women initiatives is second to none Premier, during the Women's Parliament you committed to starting with KwaZulu-Natal Women Advancement Fund of R200 million fund that would be ring-fenced for women only initiatives that would accelerate and advance their empowerment in KwaZulu-Natal and put them at the forefront of the mainstream economy.

Siyathokoza.