

**ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF THE PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL SENZO
MCHUNU ON THE OCCASION OF THE SALGA WOMEN'S COMMISSION
LEKGOTLA HELD IN ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY
KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
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Head of Department
Delegation from the National Government Departments
Representatives of Civil Society
Representatives from the Private Sector
Councillors
Honoured Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Evening

My I take this opportunity to appreciate the invitation extend to me to be part of this important event. I rise with humility to salute all women who are here today whose contribution during this Lekgotla will help to intensify and deepen the struggle for women emancipation in our country and the entire African continent.

This gathering and its focus on women is very timely, as the theme of the African Union for 2015 is aptly titled, "**Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063**". It also suggest in a very pointed way that the struggle for women empowerment, is universal with geographic bounds.

Since the ANC, our governing party took reins of government in 1994, our country has made serious strides in institutionalising gender equity across various spectrum of life and leadership. This is part of fulfilling the governing party's vision of equity across all institutions through gender mainstreaming, as a conscious approach in building a truly democratic and non-sexist society.

This is our strategic objective of making women experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes by all government departments and public entities at all levels including municipalities.

The Women's Parliament has been a critical pillar of this democratic government as it affords government together with civil society and women in general, the opportunity to raise awareness, sustain and carry forward women's empowerment and to advocate a gender equality agenda.

The letter of invitation from the leadership of SALGA extended to me to deliver these opening remarks, as well as the Concept Paper for this Lekgotla, evidently suggest that the emancipation of women remains to this day, a cardinal goal for a free and democratic country.

The line-up of speakers and topics of discussions will undoubtedly place the issue of women's participation in the local sphere of government firmly on top of the agenda. It will help shape the agenda of how we deepen and consolidate women empowerment

agenda, as well as achieve equity in various sectors of society.

It is my considered view that the local sphere of government is an important interface between elected government and the public. This therefore, is the achievement of our democratisation programme, which established this sphere of government thereby giving direct power to the people to be involved in the affairs of their country from ward level upwards.

The role of local government in promoting economic growth, job creation and alleviation of poverty has been explicitly articulated in almost every policy on governance that the ANC-led government has formulated and adopted.

Chapter 7 of our country's Constitution has clearly positioned the sphere of local government to become developmental both in form and content.

This principle is enshrined in our Constitution to ensure that government provides services to communities in a sustainable manner, and equally encourages the involvement of communities in matters of local governance. It thus goes without saying that the success of this sphere of governance like any other, is dependent on strong, committed and upright leadership.

We need a strong leadership that will ensure that local government remains the centre of popular democratic participation in the delivery of services to all our people. As we celebrate 15 years of democratic Local Government, we take comfort in progress we have made in building this sphere of government in a manner that is responsive to the needs of the people. The journey to ultimate development is still long. That is why it requires bold leadership that stands for honest service to the people.

At the Presidential Local Government Summit held on the 18th September 2014, and attended by the Premiers, Minister of Cooperative Governance, Mayors, Speakers, Chief Whips, Municipal Managers and Chief Financial Officers; traditional leaders, civil society and business leaders, the focus was on means of strengthening service delivery in our municipalities. That Summit produced the Back to Basics Programme for Local Government.

When we inaugurated this government on the 26th May 2014, we committed ourselves to building an economy that will among other issues, lead to job creation. We undertook to work towards strengthening the provision of service delivery.

As KwaZulu-Natal, we are guided by the Provincial Growth and Development Plan to among others drive Local Economic Development to ensure that the identified sectors create job opportunities for local communities. Municipalities must thus be proactive in giving effect to national and provincial government programmes, particularly in promoting sectors of the economy that drives growth. Who else can be in the forefront of such leadership than women!

The KwaZulu-Natal provincial government is working with municipalities to implement high impact programmes that will radically transform this province, so that it achieves its goal of being a gateway to the Southern Africa region. We are building required strategic infrastructure and transport logistics necessary for a competitive modern economy. At social infrastructure level, we are building community amenities, schools, clinics and new hospitals. Our commitment remains that of building integrated, cohesive and sustainable

livelihoods.

Through the Human Resource Development Council, we are focusing on education and acceleration of skills development as the true basis for empowerment of all communities. The creation of an environment conducive to learning and teaching, fighting crime and ensuring peace and stability is equally dependent on diligent councillors that inspire communities to actively participate in building sustainable communities.

President Zuma is attending the 70th Session of the United National General Assembly, wherein Member States have adopted Sustainable Development Goals. These build on the Millennium Development Goals, which had set targets for development including promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. As South Africa, we made great strides in meeting our obligations, which has led to major improvement on life expectancy. This progress has been recorded due to integrated work of government across all spheres.

In ushering these Sustainable Development Goals, it means we are once again called upon to continue our forward march to a better South Africa. Mayors, councillors and civil servants must play a role in ensuring that citizen access to government services such as health facilities, clinics and hospitals is enhanced. They need to mobilize community participation in the structures of governance as active participants in management of their affairs.

Programme Director, the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals places greater responsibility on our shoulders. They call for an 'end to poverty in all its forms' and ensuring we 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. It calls on us to 'promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all'.

To ensure that human development is placed on a permanent state of progress, they call on us to 'build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation'. Of great importance for the local government sphere, is that we 'make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'.

These goals are not just for countries at national level, but their realisation will be at local level. This Lekgotla must therefore discuss the participation of women in all these issues to shape the agenda of their implementation. Women are vital agents of social cohesion and development, which is a role they perform naturally at home and in the whole of society. However, women are the world's largest vulnerable group.

As women leaders in local government, you should discuss the participation of women in grassroots programmes aimed at equity, inclusive economic growth and sustainable livelihood. You should discuss and resolve on pragmatic programmes whose implementation will lead to tangible outcomes for an end to exploitation and marginalisation of women.

Part of the struggles that women leaders at local government level must continue to wage, is the fight against serious diseases such HIV and AIDS, lifestyle diseases, cancers etc. You must pronounce on how we mainstream in our governance programmes, a sustained fight against rape and abuse of women. This is part of the integrated approach to governance that is required if we are to make concrete progress

on these Sustainable Development Goals.

Programme Director, the provincial government through various programmes championed through the Office of the Premier endeavours to unite all women in this province notwithstanding their different experiences arising from race, class, ethnicity, religion and the country's demographics.

Since 2014, the Provincial Government has hosted initiatives like Women's Summit, Women in Media and Widows Summit, as part of our efforts aimed at mobilizing our society behind a common goal of achieving women empowerment by fighting against all forms of their discrimination and marginalisation. Government is steaming ahead with the implementation of resolutions reached in these summits.

As part of achieving radical economic transformation, the provincial Cabinet held a Special Meeting on the 23rd September 2015, wherein we approved a public procurement programme that will expand opportunities to the majority especially women owned enterprises.

You should consider organising District-Based Economic Empowerment Exhibitions in every district to expose and empower women locally, while attracting investors for markets. This should include a database of all women owned businesses. Support must be intensified for food security programmes and ensure that women involved in farming are assisted with technical skills and access to markets for their agricultural products.

As government we say, the transformation within and of the economy must place women leadership at that centre. It must be in line with the creation of opportunities for women to play a leading role not only in government where the commitment to achieve a 50/50 agenda is firmly pursued, but must extend to all areas of human life.

We further reiterate as government that we are serious about women empowerment and we will continue to strengthen the implementation of these resolutions.

We are also emphasizing the importance of strengthening feedback mechanisms to ensure that women do not only wait for the Women's Parliament before they are given information on what government is doing to advance their interests.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the leadership of SALGA. I thank you for choosing this province to host this Lekgotla.

This is a fitting tribute to the Women of this province who have worked tirelessly to create a prosperous province.

I thank you