

**REMARKS BY HONOURABLE PREMIER SENZO MCHUNU AT THE OCASSION OF THE WOMEN IN BUSINESS EVENT HELD AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE IN DURBAN ON 17 MAY 2015**

Master of Ceremonies

Honourable Minister of Small Business Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu

Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma

Mayor of EThekweni Municipality, Clr James Nxumalo

Distinguished Guest

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my humble honour to be with you and be afforded an opportunity to make remarks in this important event that celebrates women in business. The event in itself is ironically timely. It takes place as we mourn the departure of our icon, Mme Ruth Mompati in memory of her sterling contribution to our collective freedom and women emancipation.

With each event of celebration we hold to affirm one another and mark our collective progress as a nation, we dare not forget the struggles by women like her to ensure that in a patriarchal society like ours, the place of women under the sun is not confined to the kitchen.

We are deeply indebted to her and her entire generation of leaders, for their sheer force of determination to end apartheid and all other forms of oppression and discrimination. We thank her for the role she played in the struggle for women emancipation in particular, and of the liberation of humankind in general. It is thus befitting that as we celebrate the successes of women, in particular those who have broken corporate glass ceilings, we must pay tribute to women of 1956 who marched to the Union Buildings.

Because of their contribution among others, I have this honour on the basis of the Office I hold and the democratic government I represent, to stand before you tonight. Indeed, her sacrifice and that of the broader Federation of South African Women, ensured that women's place was not in the kitchen, but everywhere.

The struggle for the total emancipation of women goes beyond issues of civil liberties, and at its core, is elimination of all kinds of barriers to success in any and every field of human endeavor. Therefore, economic emancipation through creation and support to women business enterprises, is one area of focus as we seek to end poverty and socio-economic exclusion.

This event is thus another milestone in a string of achievements by women's movement, as we continue our long march to a truly democratic, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa. Even as we continue to face numerous social challenges, we get courage in knowing that some odds have been overcome. We become emboldened with each barrier we break in the advancement of women.

We gain courage with each business success we record in different sectors of economy. Many companies have been started by women and there are making significant impact in sectors like manufacturing, financial services, mining, information communication and technology, aviation and healthcare. There are other successes being achieved by women that we must celebrate in academia, science and technology, arts, and in international inter-governmental organisations.

None should dare forget that not so long ago, South Africa was a pariah among nations of the world. We were a country in isolation and thus denied our full contribution to the advancement of humanity in important areas like trade, cultural, educational and sporting exchanges. We had to rebuild our fraternal relations with our neighbours and the entire world. As we reintegrated our country and economy into regional and global arrangements, we had to recalibrate our foreign policy.

Our country championed the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which underscored the close partnership between government and private sector in achieving development. It was also a framework that reinforced a view that our prosperity as a nation, indeed lies in mutual cooperation with our neighbours and other nations of the world.

The task of achieving this was placed on the shoulders of a woman. There could thus be no deserving recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award than this daughter of the

soil, who in her time as Minister tasked with our foreign policy, ensured that our country gains international reputation as a symbol of peace and democratic governance. In the process, business opportunities opened up globally for a number of South African companies. Her efforts in promoting an image of a South Africa that is stable, well governed and at peace with itself, positioned our country as a preferred destination for tourism, trade and investment. Many business opportunities and new markets for exports of our goods, began to open up and not only for big corporates but for small and medium enterprises as well.

Her elevation to the top post in the corridors of the African union in Addis Ababa, has brought much elevated respect for our own resolutions as the African continent on how we govern our affairs. She has brought stability to the administration of the African Union and championed a roadmap to the full integration of the Continent.

We applaud initiatives by Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Small and Business Development for supporting small and medium enterprises owned in particular by women business. The exposure of these businesses to international markets, not only creates new markets for their goods and services, but also ensures that further opportunities for other aspiring entrepreneurs are opened in the value chain of business development.

We remain determined to ensure that as part of growing our economy, necessary support is given by government to women enterprises. This will ensure that the success rate of new businesses that are created by entrepreneurs, do not fail at infancy. We thank Minister Zulu and her department for this initiative to honour these women for their contribution to the health of our economy and efforts to create sustainable jobs.

We congratulate all those being honoured tonight, and are hopeful that their success will inspire other to pursue their dreams. We wish them continued success that will lead to their enterprises reaching global corporate heights.

I thank you