

**THE SPEECH BY MEC FOR COGHSTA, MR. BASIKOPO MAKAMU ON BEHALF OF THE PREMIER DURING THE PROVINCIAL SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT(SALGA) WOMES COMMISSION LEKGOTLA NETWORKING DINNER AT THE PARK INN HOTEL, POLOKWANE**

11 September 2024

Program Director,

Salga PEC Deputy Chair Cllr Thandi Zitha,

Salga PEC Member & Capricorn District Municipality Executive Cllr.

Mamedupu Teffo,

Salga Gauteng Province Women's Commission Chairperson Cllr. Eunice

Mgcina

Salga Women's Commission Deputy Chair, Cllr.Magdeline Lewele, Salga

District Commisioners,

Chairperson of Multi-Party Women's Commission,

House of Traditional Leaders represented by Kgoshigadi Raphahlelo &

Kgoshigadi Sekgopo,

Women Mayors, Speakers and Chief Whips,

Salga Provincial Director of Operations, Ms Ledile Sebati,

Chapter 7 Institutions represented by Ms. Yvonne Mashele from Statistics

South Afica and Ms. Khensani Hlekane from Commission for Gender

Equality.

Distinguished guests,

Ndi madekwana, Riperile, Thobela, Good evening, Goeie naand.

It is with great joy that I stand before you this evening at this Provincial SALGA Women's Commission Lekgotla networking dinner.

As we gather under the theme "Celebrating 30 Years of Freedom Towards Women's Development," we are reminded of the long journey we have undertaken and the significant milestones we have achieved. However, we are also acutely aware of the work that still lies ahead as we strive to fully realize the vision of gender equality and women's empowerment in every sector of our society.

Program Director, the significance of this Lekgotla can not be overstated as it is a critical platform where we can evaluate and debate the representation of women within local governance structures across our province. It is a space where we can assess the level of women's participation in the governance of our districts, foster and strengthen partnerships with other women's structures, and reflect on our progress in meeting both regional and international commitments for achieving gender equality by 2030.

This Lekgotla is not just a meeting; it is a gathering of minds, a convergence of purpose, and a celebration of the collective power of women. It is a space where women leaders, can share their experiences, learn from each other, and develop strategies to overcome the challenges that still hinder full participation in governance. It is a place where women voices can be amplified, concerns can be addressed, and aspirations can be transformed into actionable plans.

The benefits of this Lekgotla must extend far beyond the confines of this room. The discussions and decisions that will be made here have the potential to influence and shape the future of governance in our province. By evaluating the representation of women in local governance, we can identify gaps and develop strategies to ensure that women are not just present in decision-making structures but are actively participating and leading.

Program Director, a gathering of this nature must be able to provide an opportunity to strengthen partnerships with other women's structures, both within and outside of government. These partnerships are crucial in creating a united front that can advocate for women's rights and gender equality at all levels of governance. By working together, we can ensure that women's voices are heard and that their contributions are recognized and valued.

As we gather here in this Lekgotla, let us allow ourselves to go deeper to assess our progress in meeting regional and international commitments for achieving gender equality. By reflecting on our achievements and challenges, we can develop strategies to accelerate our progress and ensure that we are on track to meet our targets by 2030. This is particularly important as we face increasing pressure to deliver on our commitments and ensure that no woman is left behind in our journey towards equality.

Program Director, the influence of the SALGA Women's Commission Lekgotla in shaping governance can not be underestimated. The

decisions and recommendations that emerge from this Lekgotla have the potential to shape policy, influence legislation, and guide the development of programs that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

By bringing together women leaders from across the province, this Lekgotla provides a platform for sharing best practices, identifying innovative solutions, and developing strategies to address the unique challenges faced by women in governance.

It is through these discussions that we can develop a roadmap for achieving gender equality in governance and ensure that women's voices are heard in all decision-making processes.

As we continue to pave the way for women in our country, this Lekgotla is best placed to serve as a powerful tool for advocacy. By highlighting the challenges faced by women in governance and proposing solutions, this platform can influence public opinion, shape the narrative around women's participation in governance, and push for the adoption of gender-sensitive policies and practices.

Program Director, the increasing number of women ascending to positions of power in local government, district municipalities, and provincial government is a testament to the progress we have made in our fight for gender equality. It is a reflection of the growing recognition of the value that women bring to leadership and governance.

The inclusion of many women in the top structures of our government as Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Premier's, Speakers of Parliament and Legislature, and MECs and Mayors is one great achievement that has been realised in the 30 years of our democracy. However, it is also a

reminder that our work is far from complete, as we still have other sectors that downplay the significance of having women in leadership.

Program Director, while we celebrate the achievements of women who have broken barriers and shattered glass ceilings, we must also acknowledge the challenges that remain. Women in governance continue to face significant obstacles, including gender discrimination, lack of support, and limited access to resources. These challenges are often compounded by societal norms and cultural attitudes that undermine women's leadership and perpetuate gender inequality.

Program Director, one of the most pressing challenges faced by women in governance is the persistent issue of gender inequality. Despite the progress we have made, women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making structures, and their contributions are often undervalued. This is particularly evident in local governance, where women are often excluded from key decision-making processes and are not given the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

Many women leaders face significant obstacles in accessing the resources and networks needed to succeed in their roles. This lack of support has led to burnout, isolation, and a sense of powerlessness, which is hindering women's ability to participate in governance.

Program Director, one of our founding leaders in the politics, an activist, our forebare, our mother Winnie Madikizela Mandela said, " If you are to free yourselves, you must break thr chains of oppression yourselves. Only then can we express our dignity, only when we have liberated ourselves can we co-operate with other groups. Any acceptance of humiliation,

indignity, or insults is an acceptance of inferiority. " Her words are as relevant today as they were then, urging us to rise above and continue breaking the chains of gender inequality.

Program Director, our societal norms and cultural attitudes continue to pose significant challenges for women in governance. In many cases, women leaders are not given the same respect and recognition as their male counterparts, and they are often subjected to gender-based violence and harassment. These challenges are creating a hostile environment for women in governance and is undermining their ability to lead effectively.

Program Director, women as well must break away from the destructive habit of undermining each other's success through negative talk. Instead, let us stand united and make it our mission to uplift and support one another.

Charlotte Manny Maxeke wisely said, "This work is not for yourself, kill the spirit of self and do not live above your people but live with them, and if you can rise, bring someone with you." By embracing this spirit of collaboration and solidarity, we can begin to dismantle the outdated narrative that confines women to the kitchen instead of the boardroom. Women must affirm to themselves that they are capable of achieving anything they set their minds to. Together, we can redefine our roles and claim our rightful place in all spheres of life.

Program Director, in conclusion, let us remember that the fight for gender equality is not just a women's issue; it is a human rights issue. It is a fight for justice, for fairness, and for the recognition of the inherent value and dignity of every individual, regardless of gender. The SALGA Women's

Commission Lekgotla is a critical tool in this fight, and it is through platforms like this that we can continue to push for the changes that are needed to achieve true equality.

Let us leave this Lekgotla with a renewed sense of purpose, a commitment to action, and a determination to continue the work that has been started. Let us work together to ensure that the progress we have made is not lost, and that we continue to move forward in our journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

Furthermore, let us be bold, be vocal, and most importantly, be relentless in our pursuit of true equality.

Thank you.