

International Women's Day Speech By MEC Mavhungu Lerule-Ramakhanya on behalf of the Premier of Limpopo in Tzaneen

Programme Director, MEC Dieketseng Mashego
Members of the Executive Committee,
Executive Mayor of the District Municipality, Cllr Pule Shayi,
Mayor of Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality, Cllr Gerson Molapisane,
The Bakgakga Traditional Council,
Members of the Legislature,
Esteemed Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Sanibonani, Thobela, Avuxeni, Ndi Matsheloni!

Honoured guests, fearless women leaders, activists, elders, youth, and allies of gender equality,

Today, as we gather under the warm Limpopo sun, we unite to celebrate International Women's Day. This day belongs to women and all who believe in justice, dignity, and equality. Let me begin by paying tribute to the land we stand on, the soil of Tzaneen, nourished by the sweat and resilience of generations of women. From the ancient heroines of the Kingdom of Mapungubwe to the mothers of the 1956 Women's March, we are here because they were there.

Today, we remember that women's struggles know no borders. Centuries ago, women in Seneca Falls raised their voices for suffrage. In 1917, Russian women marched for bread and peace, igniting a revolution. Decades later, the #MeToo movement shook the globe, proving that solidarity can dismantle silence.

In South Africa, our women's movement was forged in the fires of apartheid. The 1956 Women's March was not just a protest. It was a thunderous declaration that Wathint' Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo" - "You Strike a Woman, You Strike a Rock." Those 20,000 women, many from rural villages like ours in Limpopo, taught us that even the mightiest walls of oppression crumble when women unite.

Here in Limpopo, our grandmothers carried more than water on their heads. They carried hope. They carried resistance. Women like Charlotte Maxeke, South Africa's first Black female graduate, and Flora Tloubatla, whose songs became anthems of defiance, remind us that our province has always been a cradle of courage. We cannot rest on yesterday's victories. Today, women still bear the scars of inequality:

- Gender-based violence stains our homes and streets.
- Economic exclusion leaves rural women fighting for land, markets, and fair wages.
- Climate disasters, like the floods that ravage our villages, weigh heaviest on women's shoulders.

And yet, look around you. In Limpopo, women are rewriting the narrative. They are the small-scale farmers feeding our nation, the tech innovators in Polokwane, the teachers

nurturing our children, and the activists holding leaders accountable. I stand before you not just to praise but to pledge:

1. Economic Justice: We must launch a Women's initiative programme to support female entrepreneurs in agriculture, tourism, and green energy.
2. Safety: By now, every municipality should endeavour to have a 24-hour GBV response unit.
3. Representation: Without women's voices, no boardroom, council, or negotiation table will be complete.

But the government cannot do this alone. To the men here today, true allyship means dismantling patriarchy in your homes, workplaces, and hearts. To the youth, you must embark on a TikTok campaign. Climate strikes are to be the drumbeats of a new revolution; keep marching towards them!

Today, as we celebrate, let us also recommit. Let us honour the women who marched before us by building a world where

- A girl in Giyani dreams as big as her brothers.
- A grandmother in Mopani owns the land she tills.
- Every woman lives free from fear.

In the words of our beloved Mama Albertina Sisulu, "Women are the people who are going to relieve us from all this oppression and depression."

Let us leave here today not just inspired but organised. Let us plant seeds of change that will bloom for generations.

Happy International Women's Day!
Ke a leboga. Ndo livhuwa. Thank you.
"Malibongwe!"