

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE
INTERNAL WOMEN'S DAY COMMEMORATION AT THE OFFICE OF THE
PREMIER, MOWANENG BUILDING, POLOKWANE

Programme Director,

Director-General, Mr Nape Nchabeleng

Members of Senior Management,

Colleagues,

And, most importantly, the remarkable women of the Office of the Premier.

Ndi mats Sheloni, Thobela, Avuxeni, Good morning, Goeie Môre,

There is an African proverb that says, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that shapes the future." Yet, I dare say it is the heart of a woman that carries the world. Women are the quiet architects of families, the steady pillars of communities, the compassionate leaders in our workplaces, and the courageous builders of nations.

Every day, women carry dreams that are not only their own. They nurture children, support families, comfort communities, drive institutions and despite countless challenges, they continue to rise with grace, determination and unwavering hope. That is the extraordinary power of a woman.

As we gather today to commemorate Women's Day, we stand on the shoulders of giants. We remember the courageous women who, on 9 August 1956, marched to the Union Buildings in fearless defiance of injustice. They marched not because the journey was easy, but because the future demanded their courage.

Their powerful declaration, "Wathint' Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo" was more than a slogan; it became a timeless promise that when you strike a woman, you strike a rock. Their resilience shattered barriers and laid the foundation for the freedoms and opportunities that many of us enjoy today. It is because of their bravery that we can confidently pursue leadership, education and meaningful participation in every sphere of society.

Today, we celebrate those pioneers by honouring you as women who continue to serve with excellence in the Office of the Premier. This year's celebration is intentionally held internally because transformation begins at home. Before we can inspire change across the province, we must first recognise, appreciate and empower the women who serve within these walls every single day.

Programme Director

Women's Day is a call to action. It reminds us that gender equality is not merely an aspiration but a responsibility. Today, we honour every woman in this institution. To our cleaners, administrative professionals and support staff, you are the backbone that keeps this Office functioning. To our professionals, managers, directors, chief directors and Deputy Directors, you continue to break barriers and redefine leadership. To our interns and young professionals, you represent the promise of a brighter future. Every role matters, every contribution counts, and every woman deserves dignity, respect and equal opportunity.

This year's theme, "Empowered Women Empower Nations," reminds us of a simple but powerful truth: when women rise, nations prosper. When women have access to education, economic opportunities, safety and leadership, families become stronger, communities become more resilient and

economies flourish. Empowering women is not simply about creating opportunities for individuals; it is about building a stronger, more inclusive and prosperous society for all.

As the Office of the Premier, we remain committed to creating an environment where women are equipped to lead and to succeed. One of the most exciting interventions is the introduction of the Women Deputy Directors Leadership Development Programme. Through this initiative, women serving as Directors and Deputy Directors will receive structured leadership development to prepare them for greater responsibilities and senior executive roles.

Leadership is not only about occupying a position; it is about influencing change, making informed decisions and inspiring others. By investing in women today, we are building a strong pipeline of capable women leaders who will shape the future of our public service and our province.

Our commitment extends beyond leadership development. We continue to strengthen employment equity by increasing the representation of women in senior management and decision-making positions. We are creating opportunities for continuous learning through bursaries, training, mentorship and professional development.

We also remain committed to expanding procurement opportunities for women-owned businesses and ensuring reasonable accommodation and equal opportunities for women and persons with disabilities. These interventions reflect our belief that inclusion and empowerment must move beyond policy into practical action.

While we celebrate progress, we must also acknowledge the realities that many women continue to face. Too many women carry the weight of balancing demanding careers with responsibilities at home. Many continue to encounter workplace bias, unequal opportunities, sexual harassment, burnout and invisible emotional burdens.

Beyond the workplace, Gender-Based Violence and Femicide continues to rob women of their safety, dignity and in far too many cases, their lives. These are not just statistics; they are painful realities affecting our families, our colleagues and our communities.

As leadership, we reaffirm our commitment to creating workplaces where every woman feels safe, respected and valued. We will continue strengthening measures to prevent sexual harassment, discrimination and all forms of abuse. We will continue investing in employee wellness, mental health support and safe reporting mechanisms because no woman should ever feel alone or unheard.

But sisters, empowerment is not only the responsibility of leadership; it is also our collective responsibility. As women, let us intentionally lift one another. Let us celebrate each other's achievements instead of competing against one another. Let us mentor young women entering the workplace, share our knowledge, open doors of opportunity and become the support system we once wished we had.

The greatest legacy we can leave is not the position we hold, but the women we inspire, develop and empower to rise after us. When one woman succeeds, she should extend her hand and bring another with her.

Programme Director

As we commemorate Women's Day, let us remember that empowering women is not an act of charity; it is an investment in the future of our province and our nation. Every woman who reaches her full potential strengthens a family, transforms a community and contributes to building a better South Africa.

In closing, I want to remind every woman in this room that your dreams are valid, your voice is powerful and your presence matters. Never allow anyone to define your worth or limit your potential. Continue to lead with courage, serve with excellence and believe in the greatness that lies within you.

The journey may not always be easy, but remember that you descend from women who marched with courage, who stood firm against injustice and who proved that resilience could change the course of history.

May we continue to be the rocks upon which stronger families, stronger institutions and a stronger nation are built.

To every woman here today: keep rising, keep believing, keep inspiring, because the sky is not the limit, it is only the beginning.

I thank you.