



MINISTRY  
PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MINISTER N. KIVIET SPEECH AT  
WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATIONS OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND  
ADMINISTRATION AT RIVER MANOW  
CENTURION ON THE 25<sup>TH</sup> OF AUGUST  
2023 , AT 10H00**

Programme Director , Mr Madume

Deputy Minister , Dr Pilane-Majake

Director General , Ms Makasi

Head of Entities of our Ministry

Branch Heads

National School of Government Representatives

All Women present here today

Distinguished Guests

Malibongwe !

Allow me to take this opportunity to greet you all in the name of all women of South Africa and all of you gathered here. We have come a long way for us today to be able to celebrate women's day. This day was achieved through sacrifices that were made by all women in the fight against oppression and repression. Women took upon themselves to lead from the front to voice their concerns against apartheid government.

We will remember that nearly seven decades ago, a group of 20,000 South African women from all walks of life and various parts of our country marched to the Union Buildings, demanding an end to the dehumanizing pass laws. Today, we salute the courage of this generation and its leaders, including Lilian Ngoyi, Rahima Moosa, Helen Joseph, Sophie De Bruyn, Albertina Sisulu, Bertha Gxowa, Motlalepula Chabaku, and many others.

The problem started when the apartheid government announced that it would start issuing reference books to black women from January 1956. Women rose to the challenge and organised themselves against repression and oppression. Women organised demonstrations in 1955. From 1955 and onwards the pass issue became the most important focus of their militancy. The ruling party as the major anti government party identified itself closely with the campaign reiterating that the pass struggle was not for women alone , but for all African people.

Women's Month in South Africa presents a valuable occasion for us to honour the generations of women whose struggles have paved the way for empowering women and advancing gender equality up to the present day.

This year's theme, *"Accelerating Socio-Economic Opportunities for Women's Empowerment,"* underscores the need to improve women's participation in our economy. Unfortunately, our economy remains dominated by men, and more women are unemployed than men. Women are more likely to work part-time, unskilled, and semi-skilled jobs that offer lower pay. Women bear a disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work, making them more vulnerable to poverty, food insecurity, and hunger.

We have to make a thorough assessment of the gains and achievement of women in general and in government in particular. Despite the women's struggle the issue of gender equality remains a major challenge. The significance of that March had to be analysed. Women had to show that the stereotype of women as politically inept and immature , tied to the home , was outdated and inaccurate. The Alliance decided that 9<sup>th</sup> August would henceforth be celebrated as women's day , and it is now the case in South Africa , hence we are gathered here to celebrate the women's month.

Program Director, let me mention that achieving the emancipation of women requires economic empowerment. Women need financial security and independence to have control over their lives. That is why the government has placed a priority on investing in women's economic empowerment, as highlighted by President Ramaphosa during the 2023 Women's Day in Tshwane.

As the Public Service, we are committed to promoting the rights of all women, including women with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ women. In line with this commitment, the Department of Public Service and Administration recently facilitated a workshop on the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community on 23 August 2023, in collaboration with Lawyers for Human Rights.

Leadership of women in the public sector is the key development not only for our department or country but for the whole world. Women have unique and different experiences than men which assists to bring influence into the decision-making process. Women empowerment is key to socio-economic development. In appointing women into government President Thabo Mbeki in 2004 stated “ No government in South Africa could ever claim to represent the will of the people if it failed to address the central task of emancipation of women in all its elements , and that includes the government we are privileged to lead.

The democratic government inherited a poorly trained and racially skewed public service that was characterised by mostly poorly trained public servants. The newly elected government had to deliver on the slogan of a better life for all , however for the realisation of that much work needed to be done. That was informed by many public servants who emanated from the former homelands administration. The first task of the democratic government was to create a single public service comprising of central departments and nine provincial administrations.

The task to transition to a new government was complicated by many challenges including incorporating 15 separate administrations serving 11 different governments which had their own administrative and human resources structures. Gender representation within the public service was another pressing issue that had to be addressed by the democratic government.

It clear without any hesitation that a reasonable number of public servants have professional qualifications but the state of professionalism within the public sector remains an area of concern. Draft Framework on Professionalism concludes that “ Qualifications in isolation from other essential elements of professions such as academic and social values , are the worst predictors of professionalism “ It is also important to note that unprofessional conduct and behaviours in the public sector erodes investor confidence , diminishes morale and portrays the public sector in a negative way within the society.

Professionalisation aim is to ensure that government is responsive and professional in the service of the people. Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 indicates that “ one of the basic values underpinning public administration is that a high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained “ A highly skilled public service should also be representative of , and connected to the communities it serves.

Women leadership is restricted by various social, cultural, and political norms which need to be understood and addressed. First of all we need to address all the social inequalities hindering women’s advancement in order to change women situation in the society as well as the nation. I would like to encourage all of us gathered here to discuss this issue in all our corners to explore all the barriers restricting women advancement in order to enhance the women’s leadership.

It is important as the custodian of all government departments to lead from the front. Recognizing that the majority of women in the Public Service still occupy lower positions, we launched the Public Sector Women in Leadership Network on 18 August 2022 to support women in leadership positions. The network aims to empower and inspire women in leadership roles within the Public Sector, fostering resilience and effectiveness. It functions as a community of practice, primarily existing as an online platform with activations in different provinces. However, we must acknowledge that gender equality in key centers of power in society, including the state, economy, and civil society organs, has not yet been achieved. We also recognize the limitations of existing Public Service regulations and policies in creating an enabling environment for implementing and advancing our vision of a non-sexist society.

The Public Service has a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy working environment, especially for women. In 2013, the DPISA developed the Policy and Procedures on the Management of Sexual Harassment in the Public Service, which became effective in 2014. The purpose of this policy is to promote a workplace that is free of sexual harassment, sexual favours, intimidation, and victimization. It aims to ensure that employees, especially women, have their dignity, privacy, and right to equality respected. Currently, the Branch of Human Resource Management and Development (HRMD) in the DPISA is reviewing this policy to address the current challenges faced by women in the Public Service regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. Consultation workshops with provinces are currently underway.

Before concluding I would like to remind all of us of what Mahatma Gandhi said “ Be the change you want to see in the world “ which means despite all policies that the government will introduce , the situation will only change if we also change ourselves , we must also as women change our thoughts towards other women , in that we will grow and prosper. Women can only be economically empowered when they have both the ability to grow and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions.

It is now 29 years into democracy and we still find ourselves trapped in widespread corruption as the public sector. However public servants should not all be viewed as being corrupt , as many carry out their responsibilities diligently. Current trends indicate poor level of public trust across the South African public sector , as women we have to change that perception. Efforts to professionalise the public sector rest on recruiting and selecting public servants based on merit. We need well trained public servants who can serve the nation effectively and efficiently.

I hope as we celebrate women's day in this important event we will be able to bring the change we want to witness in our department and in government in general together. We have to boost our self esteem, shut down negativity , be open and honest amongst ourselves , advocate for female colleagues and be able to lead by example in that way we will be good ambassadors of public service professionalisation.

Thank You