

# MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

## MEDIA STATEMENT

Friday, 21 August 2020

**Attention:** News Editors and Journalists

### THE LEGISLATURE HOLDS WOMEN'S PARLIAMENT AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In celebration of the Women's month, the Speaker of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature Ms Busisiwe Shiba convened the first ever virtual Women parliament. The Women Parliament held under the new normal was chaired by the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Children Youth, Women, Public Participation and Petitions Mr Bheki Lubisi.

Speaking during the event the Speaker, Mrs Shiba conscientize all attendees and on-line participants that the women parliament was an activity with specific constitutional imperatives. "It is on this basis that all participants should not only appreciate the legitimacy of this process, but also take comfort in the fact that their comments and concerns can shape the way things are done in the province" said Speaker Shiba in her welcoming address.

In her discussion paper on accelerating women participation in the economic mainstream, Ms Nora Fakude-Nkuna expressed appreciation on the representation of women in government, whilst noting that the same cannot be said about women in the corporate world. Fakude-Nkuna further indicated that women farmers have less control on land and agricultural assets as well as challenges facing women in entrepreneurship. She alluded to the fact that "there are benefits in empowering women, and women need to be viewed as agents of change."

Concurring with the statement, was Dr Eric Khumalo, a medical Practitioner and specialist on issues of communicable diseases who said "The road to economic recovery will be starting in earnest and we are looking upon women to lead us through the economic recovery." Dr Khumalo addressed the Women Parliament on the challenges facing women during COVID-19 pandemic.

Recently, South Africa has seen an increase in gender-based related violence which became a serious concern for Commissioner Lindiwe Ntuli-Tloubatla that some communities have normalised and tolerate it, "Gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide are firmly rooted in our South African society and communities and the nation at large to an extent that some have even normalised it and tolerate it, and that is not good." She called on all members of the society to internalise and fully understand that GBV and femicide are a violation of human rights and a health issue. Commissioner Ntuli- Tloubatla deliberated on the thematic area on intensifying the fight against gender-based violence.

In her keynote address Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane urged the Legislature to strengthen the legislation in ensuring appropriate punishment for perpetrators of gender-based violence and femicide. Premier also outlined plans of the provincial government to prioritise the extension of strategic support to youth and women owned SMMEs and commercial farming enterprises through the Fortune 40 incubation programme.



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She further stressed that government will prioritise female owned enterprises through the Youth Development Fund established with a 50 million endowment.

“Women must be at the forefront of leading what His Excellency, the President of the Republic of South Africa termed as the “new normal” necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge women to also give women the space to lead, gender parity in our generation is achievable but will require unity in purpose by all of us”, concluded Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane.

Other issues raised during the Virtual Women’s Parliament were the violations of protection orders by men; the gaps in women development programmes; the need for the implementation of resolutions of the Women Parliament; the challenge of places where women report their issues not being helpful. There was also an indication that there is a need for law enforcement agencies to be well trained in handling the GBV matters. An appeal was also made for the resuscitation of the victim support centres and a need for Faith Based Organisations to be empowered in dealing with issues of abuse and gender-based violence in a manner that is balanced. A platform to be created for victims of GBV and femicide to raise awareness and assist those who are still victims by encouraging them to speak out.

MECs and representatives for departments gave a detailed report on the progress made by the departments in addressing issues which were raised by women during last year’s Women’s Parliament.

The online event was attended by the Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane, MEC for Social Development, Thandi Shongwe; MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism, Pat Ngomane; MEC for Health, Sasekani Manzini; Members of the Legislature and panellists who deliberated on thematic areas of the day.

Ends,

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