

WOMENS DAY CELEBRATION SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE MAYOR COUNCILLOR SOBANE MNUKWA IN KWABHACA ON THE 26th AUGUST 2021.

Madame Speaker

Executive Committee Members

All Councillors present today

Traditional Leaders

Municipal Officials and all officials from sector departments present

Fellow Residents

Media Houses and public present

Ladies and Gentlemen

Ndiyanibulisa ngegama le ntuthukho kunye negama leNkosi yethu uYesu Krestu, Amen.

This is an important month in the life of the women of our country, but also in the life of our nation. It was exactly 65 years ago when, 20,000 South African women marched to the Union Buildings to demand an end to the inhumane pass laws.

Despite the dangers of challenging apartheid authorities, they asserted their worth as human beings and refused to be relegated to the margins of history in their own country. Today we salute these leaders and commemorate their contributions against an unjust society.

This year's women's celebration differs because women are faced with a vile pandemic commonly referred to as GBV. The country witnessed an increase in domestic violence and abuse during the COVID-19 lockdown period which left women and children feeling vulnerable and unsafe.

This celebration also allows us to measure how far we have come in transforming society, particularly the transformation of unequal power relations between women and men. While also focusing on addressing gender oppression, patriarchy, sexism, tribalism, ageism, structural oppression, and creating a conducive environment which enables women to take control of their lives.

This, is a month that recognises woman across all boards of society. We're not only appreciating women as societal beings but we're also promoting the acceleration of basic equal rights for all women especially in work places.

Umzimvubu Local Municipality has made a few provisions in line with the Employment Equity Act, whereby female representations in top management is mandatory. We have women in the Municipal Troika, Women in the Executive Committee, Women in Senior Management and Women in Middle Management.

As part of our ongoing skills development programme, we encourage more women in the institution to register and be part of the Work Place Skills Plan (WPSP). This will enable them to grow in their respective fields and possibly occupy a management post in aid of growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen; we have declared 2021 as the Year of Charlotte Manny Maxeke, a courageous women's rights activist and also a leader who was born 150 years ago. We celebrate this year of her birth because we want to encourage the women of this country to follow her example and to follow in her footsteps.

It is indeed pleasant to note that some of our women in their respective communities have started their own women led projects. These projects have garnered support from the Municipality and are currently serving segments of the Municipal population. We've recognized the efforts conducted by the Masizakhe Women-led Cooperative at Sigidini Village, EmaXesibeni.

Mrs Ngqoko is leading a team of women in the cooperative and are seen to be covering a wide gap in the agricultural sector. These women are in the business of ploughing, selling livestock and conducting commercial trade with country wide essential food stores; Spar and Shoprite. They were recently recognized by the Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform with a Small Holder Farming Entrepreneurship Award in East London for their outstanding work in the agricultural sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen; we celebrate the resolve of these women to determine their own destiny. At the same time we pay tribute to today's generation of women. Just as the women of 1956 fought against the injustices of their time, the women of today are engaged in a new frontier of struggle. It is a struggle for equal rights, dignity, economic liberation and freedom from violence.

Just a week ago, we learnt of the gruesome killing of one of our children from Matatiele. She was brutally murdered by her cohabiting partner after a physical altercation. Her dismembered body was found in a suitcase outside her apartment. There is no amount of justification for this horrendous act and we also want to place pressure on our justice system to apply the full wrath of the law in this matter.

While there are many other unknown incidents in our area, I want to make a special plea to our local community policing forums to anonymously report any matters of GBV upon suspicion, especially if a child is involved.

I must however applaud the successful strides of our government since the dawn of GBV as a national pandemic. Key legislation around domestic violence, bail and the sentencing of offenders, as well as broadening the scope of sexual offences and other matters is currently before Parliament.

Our courts are handing down harsh penalties and sentences to those found guilty of gender-based violence and conviction rates in sexual offence cases have significantly improved.

Ladies and Gentlemen; this is a testimony of our commitment to live in a harmonious society as envisioned by the late former statesman, Nelson Mandela. We are determined to build a South Africa in which women will enjoy all the rights, all the freedoms and all the liberties that our Constitution guarantees.

Although we have gone a long way to empower the women of our country, we still have much further to go. We want to live in a society where women feel safe and are safe. We want to live in a society where women are able to assume leadership positions in the workplace, in the community, in government and in all public institutions. However this begins with our untoward attitude and will.

Lastly, let me welcome you all to this year's celebrations and trust that you will have a memorable session.

I thank you.