

**Speech by the Minister of Energy, Ms Dipuo Peters  
At a Gala Dinner in honour of Women in the Oil and Gas business  
President Hotel, Bloemfontein, Free State  
9 August, 2010**

The Premier of the Free State Mr SE Magashule,  
Major of the Free State Mr K F Morule,  
The Chairperson of the Energy Parliamentary Portfolio Committee Ms E Thabethe,  
The Chairperson of SAPIA, Mr M Radebe,  
The Executive Director of SAPIA, Mr Tshifularo,  
Representatives of NAFCO, BUSA, WOESA,  
Chairperson of Government boards,  
Captains of industry,  
Labour movements,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Mothers and Sisters,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
I greet you all.

On behalf of the Department of Energy and the Government of South Africa, it is with great joy and an honour for me to be part to hosting you at this gala dinner to honour you as women of South Africa and sisters and mothers of this continent on this very special day in our history, the history of South Africa. On this day, 54 years ago, on 9 August, 1956 some 20,000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against a law requiring black women to carry passes. This day is celebrated as a reminder of the contribution made by these women to society, the achievements that have been made for women's rights, and to acknowledge the difficulties and prejudices many women still face today. Today, we, the women of South Africa, who have come here should represent and speak on behalf of hundreds of thousands of women who could not and cannot be with us now through lack of information, poverty, and any other cause. You as employed, businesswomen or woman leaders, ought to know that the economic liberation of every woman out there, all over the country, at this moment, is in your hands. The hearts of poor women, their aspirations, their future, is in us and with us. Their expectations and future is bound in us. This is a fact we cannot ignore. If we do not take heed of this, we are reneging on our responsibilities and we are letting down the 20000 women who took to the streets 54 years ago. These women were not as empowered as we are today and therefore we need to do more.

We are women from every part of South Africa. We are women of every race; we come from the cities and the towns, from the rural areas and the villages. Most of us have come from the poor backgrounds and we more than all other people understand the plight of the poor women out there. We have come as women united in our purpose to save the African women from the degradation not of pass laws but poverty, unemployment, discrimination at work, home and marginalization in every sphere of women's lives.

Let us pause for a moment and ask ourselves what we have done like the 20 000 women who on 9 August 1956 decide to take the fate of all women in their hands and protested on their behalf risking their lives, those of their families and relations by engaging in the protest. My message to you is that we all take the courage, the aspiration and the ambitions of the 20000 women and use this to mount another struggle of the day, the economic struggle, the economic liberation or emancipation of other women from poverty and especially energy poverty, unemployment and discrimination. It is here in the Free State that our sisters through racial discrimination were dehumanized, humiliated and subjected to untold psychological traumas at the hands of people who are supposed to be their children. This, ladies we have to see to it that it comes to an end.

The government has made it possible through policy to pave the way for you to take part in the oil and gas sector as women. The Liquid Fuels Charter now part of the Act and law, allow you to have your stake in this lucrative old and all time industry. You as women have been traditionally in control of the industry and this is even attested in the bible. May I take the liberty to refer you to 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings, Chapter 4, verse 1 – 7. In this chapter, is a story of the first business woman in the Bible. Guess what - this woman was the first person in the Bible to be involved in the oil business and was a successful business woman too as she and her sons never became poor again. Her business was to sell oil. The rest of the story you can read it for yourself. You are in the right business ladies and have just claimed your positions in the ordained industry for women.

Through our collective action, we should now ensure that never again shall this industry be the sole preserve of men. This is however not an easy road and you should not underestimate the challenges. The success of the women in the sector depends on the four pillars namely relationships, equipping, attitude and leadership. These pillars were articulated by John C Maxwell in his book “The 4 pillars of Leadership”. In the book, Maxwell says:

**Relationships** are glue that holds the team together – the pull her down mentality does not help anyone. You need to network, share information and build each other to be successful in this oily business. I urge you to from today have your own association where you share information socialise and give each other assistance to enable you to grow in the sector. Most men meet at the golf clubs, in bars to share information and most big deals are actually struck in the most unconventional places. Relate to other women and pull them up. Surround yourself with other women at work and in business help them grow, nurture them, and bring them up to your level or higher.

**Equipping** - one is too small a number to achieve greatness. The American myth of the lone ranger and admiration of individual success is a thing of the past we all need to build a winning team as the Chinese proverb says “behind an able man are always able men” Great leaders seek out and find potential leaders and then transform them into good leaders. This is adding value to others. (Any business that enjoys high level of success is that which adds value to human capital). In your business add value to all but pay special attention to your sisters.

**Attitude** determines how far you can go on the success ladder. 80-90% of what we achieve depends on our attitude. As women, we need to have positive attitude and inculcate this in our sisters. Do not be known for the wrong things especially a bad attitude.

**Leadership** – the key to success in any venture is the ability to lead others and leaders have to give up in order to go up and to do this with grace. We need to support our leaders in the sector and ensure their success but in the process, these leaders ought to shape and mould other women leaders from the rank and file of us.

It is also our wish as the Department of Energy to see more women for that matter, in the oil and gas sector and energy sector in general. Women ought to take part in the whole value chain of the oil and gas sector and to diversify into all levels of the value chain of the petroleum industry and in the process creating opportunities for other women. The Liquid Fuels Charter is an instrument that seeks to create opportunities and empower the Historically Disadvantaged South Africans and you women need to take the opportunities created by this Charter. The Department of Energy together with the industry has established a South African Supplier Development Agency to especially create more opportunities for you in the procurement sector of the oil industry. Take advantage of this institution and further empower yourselves and others.

We know that it is women like you who would use your influence and power to contribute to further the emancipation of other South African women from the ravages of oppression, male-abuse, marginalisation, poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. In your business you should empower other women through employment equity and human capacity building. As a manager in business you need to employ, mentor and bring up other young women in your organisation. Reflect on this. If you are not consciously breaking the glass ceiling to promote other women at your work place, you should know right now that you have failed the revolution that was started more than 50 years ago by our mothers and sisters when they marched to the Union Building on behalf of all women then and now.

It is our hope that you will continue to champion the cause of women representation in the private sector, and even surpass that which, we as Government, have managed to achieve as far as representation of women is concerned. Let me indulge you in the achievements of government. Able women have been appointed to positions of influence. Let me start with the His Excellence the President of our Republic, Mr JG Zuma. He has appointed many women as Ministers and Premiers in the country. In the Government Energy related portfolios, we have appointed mainly women. For instance, in the Department of Energy, the Director General a very able engineer is female, the Chair of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee is female, the chair of CEF is female, the Acting Chair of PetroSA is female, the Chair of NERSA is female, the EDI Holding is run by a female CEO, the list is long. The myth that there are no qualified women in the energy sector is a red herring.

I take this opportunity to inform you of one of the outcomes of the Clean Energy Ministerial meeting that was held recently in the United States of America. At this meeting, women leaders in the energy sector have pledged to support a very noble cause of promoting and campaigning for young ladies to join the energy sector especially those that are gifted in mathematics and science. We all need to recruit you women to take university degrees and course related to energy as engineers, innovators, inventors etc. Imagine women working energy electrical or solar powered appliance. The fact that they are women enables them to develop appropriate technologies that meet our needs as women. I have taken the liberty to represent not only South Africa on this agenda but the whole of Africa. I appeal to you all to participate in the inaugural meeting that will be held in Johannesburg this month and is being organised by my Department with the assistance of Sasol under Ms N Fakude. The dates will be communicated to you and I expect you there. This is one of our first initiatives to give back to other women in the country and on the continent.

I want to congratulate all women who have taken the bold step of getting involved in this oily business. This is only the beginning we expect you to grow and will give you support in your venture. You are all ordained and destined to be in this industry.

Lastly I want to appeal to you and challenge you as well. We all know that poverty in Africa and South Africa too is feminised. Most households on the continent are led by women and failure to empower these women is a failure of all of us. Although the MasterCard Worldwide Index of Women Advancement notes that there is progress in bridging gender inequality in South African the evidence on the ground say very little and is very thin. The evidence indicates that socio-economic inequality between men and women in SA has decreased according to a report by the MasterCard Worldwide Index of Women's Advancement. Part of this movement is accounted by more women enrolling in universities but yet, they still remained far off their male counterparts in terms of major managerial positions held. Although a global comparison has shown that South African private businesses employ more women in senior management positions than their global counterparts, but there is still a long way to go to address gender imbalances in the workplace, according to Grant Thornton's annual International Business Report. This assertion of Grant Thornton is correct. In the Oil and Gas business as we speak today, there is not a single female CEO among the seven oil companies operating in the country. This Ladies and gentlemen is unacceptable by any standard. If government has appointed a female Minister to run the sector, surely there should be capable women to run offices as CEO of oil companies today. One element I have noticed is that most women I have met in the business, they are occupying senior positions of no strategic influence and consequence. I urge you women occupying these positions to refuse to be used as window dressers only good to be used to approach government offices. We want genuine transformation. As we led the transformation agenda through the signing of the first Charter in South Africa - the Liquid Fuels Charter, under me we shall lead in creating more meaning full opportunities for women in the sector. I invite you to join me in fighting this noble cause. We shall fight this cause from multiple angles by pushing women

up the employment ladder by ensuring the girl children join the sector by ensuring that policies are implemented to facilitate access for women and above all by ensuring that as a country we banish energy poverty in our country through policy, legislation and implantation of energy poverty alleviating projects in South Africa and supporting for this to be done through global forums for the rest of the continent.

Gratitude is a virtue: I would like to thank the SAPIA and the LPGASASA for funding this event with my Department, the officials from DOE for organising the event, and those who have worked behind the scene to make this event the success that it has achieved.

I thank you all.