



women, children & people with disabilities

Department:
Women, Children and People with Disabilities
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE MINISTER DIPUO PETERS,
MINISTER OF ENERGY ON BEHALF OF MS LULU XINGWANA,
HONOURABLE MINISTER FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN AND PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES TO THE LAUNCH OF THE WORLD
DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2012: GENDER EQUALITY AND
DEVELOPMENT, HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2011, SUNNYSIDE PARK,
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA**

Hon Minister Pravin Gordhan, Minister of Finance, South Africa

Hon. Minister Naledi Pandor, Minister of S&T, South Africa

Madame Graça Machel

Ms. Ruth Kagia: World Bank Country Director for South Africa

Ms. Gill Marcus, Governor, South African Reserve Bank

Ms. Miriam Altman, Commissioner, South African National Planning Commission

Ms. Vuyo Mahlati, Chairperson, Post Bank and Commissioner, SA Planning
Commission

Ms. Futhi Mtoba, BUSA

Ms. Mamphela Ramphele

Honourable and distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning to you all. On behalf of His Excellency, President Jacob Zuma; the Government of South Africa, and the World Bank, I take great pleasure in welcoming you all to sunny South Africa. Indeed it is a great pleasure and honour to be the host

country for the launch of the *World Development Report (WDR) 2012: Gender Equality and Development*.

At the outset, allow me distinguished delegates, to tender humble and sincere apologies on behalf of Ms. Lulu Xingwana, Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities, who was requested to be the chair of this meeting. Minister Xingwana is at this moment hosting the World Disability Conference of State Parties in Durban, where she will be presiding over for the whole of this week.

She is not double-booked as an oversight. Instead, given that the country is playing host over the next three months to several global and regional programmes, it was not possible to reschedule any of the events. Minister Xingwana has therefore given me the honour of chairing this meeting on her behalf today. She has specifically asked me to convey her greetings and well wishes to the international world, and to share with the delegates her full support and commitment to the WDR and to gender equality and women's empowerment in general.

South Africa is strongly committed to the attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment. This is articulated in the Constitution of the Republic and in our legislative framework. In fact, in 2009, His Excellency, President Jacob Zuma pronounced on the establishment of a ministry for women, elevating the previous institutional arrangement of the Office on the Status of Women in the Presidency to a dedicated ministry. This has assisted us in taking further the country's commitment to its women.

As a core developmental objective in its own right, gender equality really is about smart economics; improving and enhancing productivity, improving outcomes for the next generation, and making institutions more representative. The World Development Report for 2012 report focuses on the *economics* of gender equality and development, and calls for action in areas where gender gaps are most significant. Hence, I am

convinced that today we will be able to emerge with direct policy efforts that are needed to close these gaps, as well concrete measures and action plans going forward.

Today's dialogue on the findings of the report is especially germane to the ongoing discussions in South Africa about the New Growth Path document and Vision 2025 strategy. Minister Xingwana has been fostering the engendering of this national macroeconomic framework, and this dialogue today is pertinent in helping us as a country to fully engage in this process so that gender equality in South Africa is really, after all, smart economics for all women, especially women in rural areas. It must also be about turning the tide against the feminization of poverty, and enabling women to lead lives of sustainable economic advancement and self reliance.

Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to highlight some of the main issues outlined in the WDR 2012:

- **Gender equality matters for development**
 - ***Productivity gains.*** Women now represent 40 percent of the global labor force, 43 percent of the world's agricultural labor force, and more than half the world's university students. Productivity will be raised if their skills and talents are used more fully. For example, if women farmers were to have the same access as men to fertilizers and other inputs, maize yields would increase by almost a sixth. Eliminating barriers that discriminate against women working in certain sectors or occupations could increase labor productivity by as much as 25 percent in some countries.
 - ***Improved outcomes for the next generation.*** Greater control over household resources by women can enhance countries' growth prospects by changing spending patterns in ways that benefit children. And improvements in women's education and health have been linked to better outcomes for their children.

- **More representative decision-making.** Empowering women as economic, political and social actors can change policy choices and make institutions more representative of a range of voices.

- **Development has closed some gender gaps:**
 - **Educational enrollment.** Gender gaps in primary education have closed in almost all countries. In secondary education, these gaps are closing rapidly and have reversed in many countries, Among developing countries, girls now outnumber boys in secondary schools and there are more young women than men in universities.
 - **Life expectancy.** Since 1980, women are living longer than men in *all* parts of the world. And, in low-income countries, women now live 20 years longer on average than they did in 1960.
 - **Labor force participation.** Over half a billion women have joined the world's labor force over the last 30 years as women's participation in paid work has risen in most of the developing world.

- **Persistent gaps:**
 - **Excess deaths of girls and women:** Females are more likely to die, relative to males, in many low and middle income countries than their counterparts in rich countries. These deaths are estimated at about 3.9 million women and girls each year under the age of 60.
 - **Disparities in girls' schooling:** Despite the overall progress, primary and secondary school enrollments for girls remain much lower than for boys for disadvantaged populations in many Sub-Saharan countries and some parts of South Asia.
 - **Unequal access to economic opportunities.** Women are more likely than men to work as unpaid family laborers or in the informal sector. Women farmers tend to farm smaller plots and less profitable crops than men. Women entrepreneurs operate in smaller firms and less profitable sectors. And as a result, women everywhere tend to earn less than men.

- ***Differences in voice in households and in society.*** In many countries, women—especially poor women—have less say over decisions and less control over resources in their households. And in most countries, women participate less in formal politics than men and are under-represented in its upper echelons.

Priorities for domestic policy action

We need to focus on those gender gaps where the payoffs for development are potentially the largest. We must seek to address excess deaths of girls and women and eliminate gender disadvantage in education where these remain entrenched; close differences in access to economic opportunities and the ensuing earnings and productivity gaps between women and men; shrink gender differences in voice within households and societies; and limit the reproduction of gender inequality across generations.

To be effective, these policies must target the root causes of these gender gaps. In some areas, as with maternal mortality, governments will need to address the single binding constraint to progress; in others, policies will be needed to tackle the issue of economic empowerment for women, especially poor and rural women.

As the international community committed to gender equality, we will need to focus on evidence-based public action through better data, impact evaluation, learning and sharing of best practices. International financial funding and support should be directed particularly to supporting the poorest countries in reducing excess deaths of girls and women (through investments in clean water and sanitation and maternal health services) and gender gaps in education. More support is needed especially to improve the availability of gender-disaggregated data and to foster more experimentation and systematic evaluation of mechanisms to improve women's access to markets, services, and justice. Finally partnerships should extend beyond governments and development agencies to include the private sector, civil society organizations and academic institutions in developing and rich countries.

Honourable delegates,

Today's launch of the World Bank report is hugely significant given its focus on gender equality and women's empowerment. We must do justice to the women of the world. Our deliberations today are therefore extremely critical. I wish you fruitful and rich deliberations.

Thank you!