



**Keynote Address by the Deputy Minister of Energy
Ambassador Thembisile Majola on the
Women in Nuclear Conference 2017 held at
NECSA Visitor's Centre,
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Women in Nuclear SA

Ladies & gentlemen

Distinguished guest,

Good morning,

I am very pleased to be here today at NECSA in celebrating Women in Nuclear. Today is the last day of Women's Month, as we decided that one day on the 9 August was far from adequate. Let us celebrate these women while acknowledging the challenges facing the nuclear sector, engineering and technology in general and the importance of addressing the gender imbalance in the energy sector and more specifically nuclear. We live in a very patriarchal society, and operate within a particularly male dominated environment – engineering, energy in general and the nuclear field. This means we must not only challenge the form, but the content, the thinking and

the understanding of the role and place of women in society and in the industry.

The Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) conducts survey annually on the industry status and have of late included statistic on gender parity. The IET has indicated that 9% of the engineering workforce is female and only 6% of the registered engineers and technicians are women. In South Africa, 58% of students enrolled in the public higher education were women but these women study health science, social science and services related programmes. Only 28.53% study engineering, manufacturing and construction. This partly explains why we have fewer women in the energy sector and nuclear in particular. . This is a concern which we should take seriously. This is in line with the global trends. Far too few women are employed in the leadership, technical and engineering fields of the energy sector. As such women in the energy sector populate low paying jobs and as well as at lower ranks

The Department of Energy Report for July 2017 acknowledges that DoE is composed of 54/ 46% of female/ male ratio at all levels. However, at SMS level, the picture is different, i.e. 40/60% Female/ Male ratio. Therefore women make up majority in the department, but they are concentrated at the lowest level. Of the 40%, senior managers at DoE, only 1.6% (4) are in the nuclear branch. The same picture is portrayed in the energy sector as a whole. This picture needs urgent attention.

Let's look closer to home within the Necsa Group. The total number of employees is **1925** and of that number, **664** are women. This constitutes **34.49%** of the total workforce. The representation gets very scanty at top management. The subsidiaries such as NTP, NTP Logistics and AEC Amersham are headed by women and there are **21** women in top leadership positions across the Necsa Group. There is movement towards the right direction at NTP that has **10** out of **24** senior leadership position occupied by women. Keep up the good work.

We can therefore to conclude that the majority of women in the Group occupy middle to lower occupational levels in the organisation, as is the case in DOE. I am reflecting on these statistics to put mirrors right in front of all of us. CEO, Dr Namane Magau and Managing Directors present here, I am sure we all agree that this must change as a matter of urgency. I urge you to take the responsibility for gender mainstreaming as it has to be done by the leadership in the organisation and prioritised. It sounds good to stand on platforms such

as these and call for acceleration of transformation. However, if these are not embedded at all levels of management then the status quo shall prevail. My eyes, your eyes must and shall remain firmly focused on the progress we make, and be deliberate about it.

As societies become more equal and every individual's productive capacity is valued and engaged, economies become more resilient. To build such a society, the key is inclusiveness, making sure that no group is kept at the margins and subjected to exploitation. In South Africa we have more women than men in our population but when you look at the incidence of poverty, unemployment, lack of educations and people in leadership, women are disadvantaged. We have fewer women in leadership, more women unemployed and more women classified as poor. Female headed households face more incidence of poverty than male headed households. The face of poverty continues to be that of a woman. Feminisation of poverty is, unfortunately, a growing reality.

We need to address the challenges facing women that are already in the energy sector. The top three common themes of what affects women are more flexible working hours and arrangements, irrespective of gender and caring responsibilities; more accessible career paths through training and learning opportunities and parity of promotion; and fairer and better pay to protect standards of living and reward development of skills.

The Department of Energy initiated different youth and women empowerment programmes as a way of catching up and promoting the agenda of women inclusion towards gender equality, as this is a challenge to all energy streams, not specific to nuclear only. In 2014, DoE embarked on Business opportunities across all Provinces, in the energy sector workshops in a quest to attract women and young people to the energy sector as entrepreneurs, professionals and investors, which culminated in 2016 Women in Energy Business Summit. The outcome of the summit was the Women in Energy Summit Declaration, which calls for the development of Energy Sector Women Empowerment & Gender Equality (WEGE) Strategy, Capacity Building for women and launching of Women in Energy Excellence Awards. The Women in Energy Business Directory was also launched during the summit and to date the directory has more than 300 women owned businesses are registered, the question is how many are nuclear businesses? The Minister of energy hosted a Women's Dialogue on the 11 august in Durban, and launched the Women in Energy Excellence Awards, with nuclear being one of the categories.

We are aware of the challenges and barriers to the nuclear sector. Lack of access to information on career opportunities in nuclear is a major barrier to most of our learners especially from historically disadvantaged communities. In this regards, the department holds Learners Focus Week, School Energy Days, Take a Girl Child to Work annually in partnership with nuclear branch and the nuclear energy sector to break the barriers. I will be hosting a School Energy Day in the Free State. 1000 learners studying STEM will be attending. I take this opportunity to invite you to attend and participate at the School Energy Day on 13 October, 2017. I invite you as women to offer your time to engage with these learners and to be a testimony to them that it is possible for women to be experts, leaders and professionals in the nuclear sector. The main question is how involved are women and young people already in the nuclear energy sector in holding hands with DoE and Energy sector as a whole to transform the energy sector, in particular nuclear?

Minister Naledi Pandor captures the responsibility of women in senior public sector positions as follows, “Such leaders can have a revolutionary effect. I think we need leaders who are transformative in character, leaders who inspire those they work with. In order to achieve this, mentorship is sometimes absolutely necessary. One of the concerns one sometimes has is that women must never forget to teach the lesson that having opened the door; we must keep our foot there for it to remain open. Once it closes, then we go back rather than forward — so we have an important mentorship role to play.”

I note that unfortunately the once dynamic network, Women in Nuclear South Africa (WiNSA) is now a shadow of its former self, when it was a leader in advocacy, advocacy for transformation and communicating about the sector. We need WiNSA to again occupy its rightful place and be a trailblazer for generations to come. Networks such as SA Youth in Nuclear, need all our support.

I must declare that I am a product of many mentors and guardians that I have encountered along my path, as a young girl from Moraka, SOWETO, who went on to Botswana and Zambia as a learner and a University student in Cuba. Living and studying in foreign countries opened opportunities for me and enabled me to be one of the first 5 to 10 women Civil Engineers in South Africa in 1991, allowing me exciting work opportunities both in the public and private sectors. It makes such a difference to have a senior person to hold your hand, allow you to make mistakes, open doors for you and more than anything else allow you to believe in yourself. One such person, apart from my

mother was our late President OR Tambo. He always believed in all of us, but was particularly supportive and believed in us girls and women, even when we doubted ourselves. He was a great champion of women's rights, abilities and the need for women to take their rightful place alongside men. I believe he would not have been impressed by our current pace of transformation. It is therefore my responsibility and my passion to open opportunities for ordinary women within the energy sector.

Yesterday, I was with my sisters-in-arms, women military veterans in Mpumalanga. These are women that gave up their youth, and were prepared to lay down their lives for the liberation of this country. Many of them today, are living in very dire conditions and feel that the freedom they gave everything up for has not yet arrived for them. They deserve better. I want to believe that, working together, we can also make a difference in their lives as all they ask is for opportunities to contribute and participate in the economy so they can take care of themselves and their families.

It is my considered view that women gathered here from the nuclear sector are at a privileged position. This is sector that provides ground-breaking solutions to the country and at global stage. There is untapped arena for research that can change our worldview as we know it. The question is, are you ready to run this race? When last did you brush up your qualifications? Have you had that talk with your supervisor- what's next for me? The time is now. Learning from each other, we can build a better and progressive nuclear industry through partnership, mutual respect and collaboration.

In conclusion, let us celebrate the milestones achieved to date. It is good to celebrate and communicate so we understand better and appreciate what the barriers to diversity are. Even though we may see limited progress, we need to keep that positive momentum going until we have clear evidence that there is equity for both genders. Identifying and understanding the barriers doesn't mean that those barriers will crumble. There has to be action, big or small – whether that is through showing your support for the cause, being a role model to young people, or supporting campaigns to policy makers about making changes. You need to act and act now to ensure gender parity at your workplace, sector and industry. Gender parity is everyone's business.

I thank you all for your attention, and hope that all of us here can and will be champions and ambassadors for the nuclear industry, for innovation and for excellence.