



**Address by Ms Elizabeth Marabwa, Chief Director,
Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, at the
Women in Energy Conference, Africa Energy Indaba, 03 March
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Monica Maduekwe: Resource Mobilisation, ECOWAS |

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Panelists

CEOs of the industries

International Guests

Representatives of civil society organizations

Esteemed Guests

Members of Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a great pleasure and an honour as Department of Mineral Resources and Energy to host the Women in Energy conference on the margin of Africa Energy Indaba. This conference is hosted in partnership with Africa Energy Indaba. Focus on the women in energy is of great importance as it is an opportunity to discuss, debate and seek solutions to enable women to be part of energy value chain across the African Continent. It is imperative that women and youth matters need to be elevated to all programmes and conferences to create synergy and integrate them to the energy mainstream.

The IEA Africa Energy Outlook 2019 states that - Energy sector is critical to the African continent economic development and success. One in two people added to the global population between today and 2040 is set to be African and by 2025 Africa's population will exceed that of both India and China. Africa urban population is set to grow by more than half a billion. This greater than the growth seen in China urban population. These profound demographic changes are set to drive economic growth, infrastructure development and energy demand and Africa will be progressively shaping global energy trends. The energy status particularly access to electricity, clean cooking and unreliability of electricity supply is a challenge but also an opportunity for women in energy business. Nearly half of Africans about 600 million people do not have access to electricity in 2018, 80 percent of sub-Saharan African companies suffered frequent electricity disruptions leading to economic losses. Approximately 70 percent of the population about 900 million people lack access to clean cooking and indoor pollution caused by use of biomass cause 500 000 premature deaths a year.

Gender balance means business.

The gender balance campaign ask governments, private and public companies to endorse and support the principles of equal pay, equal leadership and equal opportunities and to take concrete actions to close the gender gap in the energy sector. Why? Is it just a nice to have? No. Studies have shown that gender diversity correlates with both profitability, increased efficiency and value creation. **So gender balance is serious business.**

What is gender balance? It means more women in senior management. We need going forward to measure women participation in senior management across the various energy companies. More women in senior management means higher profit and greater efficiency. Gender balance is not coming about without its struggles and sacrifices, protests and conflicts. This transformation is going through many difficulties when those who led with a vision to emancipate women are often viewed with suspicion from within the ranks of women themselves and opposed by the male-dominated hierarchies. Even today there are ripples and reflections of these tendencies. One can never say the world has seen gender equality and rights of women championed in the fullest sense.

According to the International Energy Agency document of 2019 **Energy and gender: A critical issue in energy sector employment and energy access**, the energy sector remains one of the least gender diverse sectors and closing this gender gap will be vital as women are key drivers of innovative and inclusive solutions. Despite making up 48% of global labour force – women only account for 22% of the traditional energy sector. For management levels the numbers are even lower. The barriers

women face in the energy sector are similar to those they face elsewhere in the economy. However, the challenges of the energy sector are more pressing since the sector is going through a process of transformation; a clean energy transition will require innovative solutions and business models to be adopted and greater participation from a diverse talent pool.

Programme Director

The USAID research paper **Making the Case for Women in the Energy Sector** demonstrates the benefits of integrating gender considerations into the energy value chain and throughout the power sector. When the barriers that prevent women from having equal access to energy and economic opportunities are removed, significant productivity gains are unlocked, thereby strengthening development and economic outcomes. Additionally, women are transforming the energy sector in their roles as energy entrepreneurs, innovators and decision makers. Creating and sustaining suitable environments for women is necessary. It allows for their engagement and access to knowledge, finance and resources, as well as provides them with role models, mentors and flexible working arrangements for increased impact.

What are we doing?

As the Department, our goal is to transform the energy and mining sectors to reflect the population of South Africa. I would like to reflect on the activities that the DMRE has undertaken and continue to champion women in energy over the past five years in order to transform the sector:

- The Department undertook the Provincial Business opportunities in the Energy sector awareness workshops for women throughout the

country. This was done in partnership with energy companies, financial institutions and SoE's. Over 2000 Women in business or aspirant participated in this project.

- These workshops culminate to a National summit attended by more than 1000 women. The summit came out with a declaration aimed at addressing the following priority areas:
 - ✓ need for WEGE Policy and Strategy with implementation plan,
 - ✓ need for women in energy recognition awards,
 - ✓ access to finance, capacity buildings for women,
 - ✓ review of the Independent Power Producer procurement and set aside specific target for women, and
 - ✓ establishment of women in energy electronic directory.
- For women entrepreneurs to thrive, they need an enabling environment with enhanced opportunities for participation and to this end the WEGE policy was developed and approved. The policy calls for women empowerment to achieve gender equality.
- WEGE strategy and implementation plan was developed and was consulted with energy companies and SoE's. It is currently at its final stage for approval.
- Women in Energy Electronic Directory and database has been developed and operationalized. The Department is in the process of getting the directory interactive.
- Launch of Women in Energy Awards. The Department launched the women in energy awards in Durban in 2017 by the former Minister of Energy Honourable Kubayi-Ngubane.
- The Department has been in partnership with Africa Energy Indaba in hosting women in energy conference and have reached considerable number of women annually.

I would like to urge the private sector to play its part. Private sector has the potential to offer many opportunities for women to formally participate in the sector. Private sector should actively recruit and retain women, as well as developing gender-responsive and inclusive strategies across the value chain of the industry.

Personally, I have been motivated by many examples where empowerment of women is first of all felt by the masses through the vision of a pioneering ladies. **Florence Nightingale** who made nursing into such a structured and noble profession, **Ida Scudder** who in response to witnessing three tragic deaths of women in childbirth in Tindivanam in a single night in the late 1890's responded to the challenge and heard God's call to become a missionary doctor and establish the reputed Christian Medical College (CMC Vellore, first started for women). In nuclear Marie Curie who became the first woman to win a Nobel Prize in Nuclear. **Today we will have young African women who have managed to breakthrough in the energy sector. A testimony to all of us that it is possible but not an easy road.**

It is time to write the history of the women in the energy sector and some of you present here need to take up the challenge and fund such a studies so that next year we can lunch our own booklet on African women in energy.

Balance means business, equal pay, equal leadership and equal opportunities. That is all we want. Government is doing its part to create a conducive environment. The South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced at the State of the Nation Address that "the empowerment of women is critical to inclusive economic growth.... Over the next five years,

the Industrial Development Corporation is targeting R10 billion of own and partner funding for women empowered businesses.” Private companies, Public Companies meet the government halfway by providing access to opportunities for women. It makes economic sense and is serious business.

I thank you and wish you fruitful deliberations and most important network and meet at least someone.

Malibongwe Igama Lama Khosikazi.