



**Keynote Address by Dr Nobuhle Nkabane, Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources  
and Energy during the Women in Energy Breakfast**

**11 October 2023,**

**International Convention Centre, Cape Town**

Programme Director, Ms Hilda Mhlongo,

Panellists,

Delegates

Members of the Media

Esteemed Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and welcome to this empowering breakfast session where we meet to reflect on **Unlocking Opportunities for Women in the Oil & Gas Sector**. Today, we gather not just as individuals but as trailblazers in an industry that has traditionally been dominated by men.

Our presence here signifies a shift, a powerful step towards greater inclusion and diversity in the heartbeat of the economy.

Today's battles for economic inclusion, transformation, economic empowerment and social and economic development for women was led by the brave women who, in 1956 marched to Pretoria to protest against the introduction of the Apartheid pass laws for black women.

Our forebears gallantly fought for women emancipation by ensuring that women's rights are included when **the Freedom Charter was drawn up**, by submitting a document called "**What Women Demand**". This seminal document addressed needs such as child care provisions, housing, education, equal pay, and equal rights with men in regard to property, marriage and guardianship of children.

The struggle to include and empower women is still on, and we need to ensure that in our lifetime, we fulfil the aspirations of our forebears.

In the dynamic landscape of the oil and gas sector, the need for women's active participation is more crucial than ever. It goes beyond mere representation; it is about tapping into the wealth of perspectives, talents, and innovative ideas that women bring to the table. As we strive for gender equality, we must recognize that empowering women in this sector is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity for sustainable growth.

The recent oil and gas discoveries in the SADC region, including South Africa, present unprecedented opportunities. It is imperative that women actively engage in acquiring the necessary skills and expertise to harness these opportunities. We are not merely spectators in this pivotal moment; we are contributors, leaders, and architects of the future energy landscape.

Our mandate as the Department is to regulate, transform and promote the minerals and energy sectors, providing sustainable and affordable energy for growth and development, and ensuring that all South Africans derive sustainable benefits from the country's mineral wealth.

In addition, the DMRE, through its Gender Mainstreaming and Transformation Directorate (GMT) is mandated to empower women in the mining and energy sectors. As a catalyst towards the achievement of this mandate, the Department has developed **Women Empowerment and Gender Equality strategy for the energy sector**.

In August 2021, Minister Mantashe launched the **Energy Sector Women Empowerment and Gender Equality (WEGE) Strategy**, and appointed the Ministerial Gender Advisory Council from different energy sectors to monitor and report on the implementation of the strategy.

The WEGE Strategy objective is **to create a transformed and inclusive energy sector by developing mechanisms and interventions towards women empowerment and gender equality**

Ladies and gentlemen it is important to ensure that the mentioned strategies bear fruits; you have to actively engage us on implementation, and we have to work together to ensure the objectives of both strategies are met.

Equal opportunities are not just a slogan; they are the bedrock of a thriving industry. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that women have the same access to opportunities, mentorship, and career progression as our male counterparts. Let us break down the barriers that have hindered the progression of women in the oil and gas sector and create an environment where merit, not gender, defines success.

Being well-organized is not just a personal trait; it's a strategy for success particularly in the male-dominated energy sector. As we navigate through the complexities of this industry, let us leverage our collective strength, network, and create a supportive and inclusive environment that harnesses the potential of women and that promotes their leadership in shaping the future of the energy industry in general. By supporting each other and fostering a culture of collaboration, we can not only take up space but redefine and expand it, leaving an indelible mark on the industry.

We need to have more events of this nature to provide a platform for women professionals, researchers, policymakers, and aspiring leaders to come together, share their expertise, and discuss pertinent issues specifically in the oil and gas sector.

In conclusion, this breakfast session is not just a gathering; it's a call to action. Let us seize the opportunities that lie ahead, break the glass ceilings, and pave the way for future generations of women in the oil and gas sector. Together, we can fuel not only the engines of the economy but also the flames of progress and equality.

**Thank you.**