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**SPEAKING NOTES FOR MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,  
LAZARUS MOKGOSI, ON THE OCCASION OF THE WOMEN'S MONTH  
DEBATE HELD AT THE NORTH WEST PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE**

**DATE: 05 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Acting Premier of the North West**

**Honourable Members**

**Revolutionary greetings to all of you in this House.**

Honourable Speaker, we are gathered here, five days after the commemoration of August Women's month under the theme : **“Women's Socio-Economic Rights and Empowerment: Building Back Better for Women's Improved Resilience.”**

This theme, Honourable Speaker, should quicken our conscience as leaders to work as a collective to promote the socio-economic rights of women and to continue to highlight the important role that women continue to play in our society.

The role of women in the society is so sacrosanct. Today no one can stand tall and dispute the fact that women are the pillars of our society in many respects.

We pay tribute to the generation of women whose selfless sacrifices laid down a firm foundation for the construction of a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous society based on justice, equality and the rule of law.

Women's month reminds us how far we have come as a nation, and pinpoint the journey that we still have to travel to attain total liberation of women from the shackles of poverty, unemployment, inequality and gender based violence.

We appreciate the role that women played and continue to play in our society to this very day and age.

Without any shadow of doubt, women made immense contribution in the struggle for freedom. Our freedom was never earned without the full participation of women.

In 1956, twenty thousand women from all the walks of life staged the largest demonstrations in this country's history and was underpinned by the adoption of the Women's Charter of 1954.

Quoting from its preamble, the Women's Charter reads in part:-

“As women, citizens of South Africa, we are here to claim our rights. We want recognition and respect for the work we do in the home, in the

workplace and in the community. We claim full and equal participation in the creation of a non-sexist, non-racist democratic society. If democracy and human rights are to be meaningful for women, they must address our historic subordination and oppression. Women must participate in, and shape the nature and form of our democracy.” **(Close quote).**

Their brave actions inspired women to take their rightful places in departments, municipalities, state owned entities and the civil society.

Through their sacrifices, we now live in a country which recognises women as equal citizens, with equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities.

I am pleased to indicate that the Department of Social Development which I have an honour to lead as a member of the Executive Council, have worked hard to attain 50:50 employment of women in senior management positions in the current financial year.

Equally important, most of the NPOs which include old age homes, residential facilities, treatment centres and many other facilities that provide social services that we fund as a department are largely owned by women.

We acknowledge that women have been impacted by COVID-19 pandemic during various alert levels that we have been through as a country. Most of the women lost their jobs during this period than men. Many businesses were forced to close down. In some households women had to bear the burden of raising children alone after they spouses succumbed to Covid-19.

To mitigate the impact of the pandemic on women owned cooperatives and Small Medium and Macro-Enterprises, we have already started to provide material support in the form of equipment and stock to many women in rural areas across the province This initiative and many others that we employ in the department will make women, a central part of efforts to build back better and to enhance their resilience in the midst of economic turmoil.

Honourable Speaker, the scenery of the world for women is changing drastically - giving women opportunities to make the difference in businesses, in civil society organisations and in politics.

- Women should be prioritised in skills development programmes of any entity.
- Women should be given the recognition they deserve in the workplace.
- Women should not be oppressed at this time and age
- Women should be given adequate resources as their male counterparts to execute their duties.
- Women should also be considered in recruitment of senior management positions in all the entities
- Women should work in a conducive environment.
- Women should be protected from all the advances of sexual harassment in the workplace.

- Women should be informed of all the policies of their respective organisations.

Motlotlegi-Mmusisa Kgotla, re tseneletswe ke nakedi mo ntlung. Tshotlako ya bong e santse e le tlhoba boroko mme re samaganeng le yona re le puso, makoko a dipolotiki, ditheo tsa sedumedi le mekgatlho e e seng ya puso.

Gender based violence is so real and it has become a pandemic that we all have to confront in our lifetime.

It continues to affect women and children. To this end we have make it a point that our gender based violence programme runs for 365 days in partnership with all government departments, NPOs and state owned entities in the North West province.

This year long programme is being implemented in the form of awareness campaigns, community dialogues, motorcades and sharing of information through various media platforms.

Survivors of gender-based violence have access to support and services, including the GBV hotline, shelters and centres providing support to victims of sexual violence.

Honourable Speaker, much still need to be done to eradicate gender based violence. As a nation we must move beyond shock and horror every time a woman or child is raped or killed. We must all take concrete actions to ensure safer families and safer communities.

We can no longer turn a blind eye to the cries of help from the most vulnerable in our midst. The culture of bystanderism must come to end.

Gender based violence affects us all. We must encourage members of the community to report all cases of assault, abuse and harassment. We must not normalise harassment of women.

It is the responsibility of all South Africans to end the culture of silence around gender-based violence and report perpetrators to the police. All of us, whether in our communities or in our homes must do all we can to promote and protect the rights of women and children.

In conclusion Honourable Speaker and Members, the onus is upon all of us that are part of this debate to demonstrate our concern on the scourge of abuse and be exemplary in our communities through our deeds and speeches.

We are a resilient nation and I strongly believe that we will always triumph over the challenges that we face today in pursuit of a better life for women in our country.

**I thank you.**