

**Speech by Her Worship, Cllr Patricia Alettah Mosito, Mayor of Thabazimbi,
during Women in Mining Conference held at, Amandelbult Rec Club on
Woman's Day 2011**

9 August 2011

Women in Mining "Taking a step forward to be a step ahead"

It is indeed an honour for me to be part of this event today to share with you as we reflect on the achievements and challenges that women have realised throughout the journey of fighting for democracy and unity for all South Africans.

At the outset, I must also mention that I was humbled when I received the invitation for me to come and talk to you about issues that affects women in our country. We should be proud that we have a government that places the empowerment of women at the top of its agenda. However government alone and progressive legislation that is not backed by the involvement of women will never be enough in advancing the total emancipation of women.

In appraising "Taking a step forward to be a step ahead," we surely should salute our great stalwarts like, Lillian Ngoyi, Ida Mtwana, Rosie Mpetha, Charlotte Maxheke, Helen Joseph, Adelaide Tambo, Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Mandela and many other unsung heroines of our struggle for their vision, leadership and sacrifices for our freedom.

I believe that we all know the history where women are coming from and the challenges that existed then, and still exist today. Women have carved for themselves a role as primary catalysts for protest and opposition to white minority rule in our country.

The historic march by 20 000 women against Dompas to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1956 can only serve to inspire us all to continue with the struggle for the total emancipation of women and society at large. What comes to my mind now, is how we ensure that as women, we progressively work together to address all the challenges that hinder women to enjoy the fruits and benefits of the struggle that our great-grandmothers, grandmothers and our mothers fought tirelessly for.

There are a number of challenges that are facing South African women. Women bear the burden of poverty and unemployment. Research has shown that women head most households, but still we find women marginalised in the workplace, the formal and informal economy. Women's role and position in society more often

than not, is perceived within the questionable duality of motherhood and economic independence.

In South Africa, women constitute a large percentage of the informal economy. Home-based tasks, childcare, collecting firewood and water, taking care of other dependants are all tasks that are systematically omitted in the broad analysis of women's contribution to the economy. This should be a challenge for you and me, to ask ourselves, what we are doing as women to support and make a difference in the lives of those women who are still trying to make a difference in the lives of their families and their communities.

Women achievers should henceforth stop from slamming the door in the face of others less privileged. We should support each other and nurture the development and empowerment of other women.

Women are the major agricultural producers and are the most active in the informal economy of our country, yet they represent the majority of the illiterate and poor. They are profoundly affected by conflict and displacement. They are at the greatest risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

However, women's participation in the economy remains largely undervalued, if not completely ignored, because women's work is not easily measured by traditional data-collection systems.

But the activities that are regarded as "women's work" which are vital to the survival of the community such as fetching water and growing food for the family - are not always recorded. Likewise, household chores are not taken into account when measuring economic activity and production. Many women therefore bear a traditional burden of unpaid work in addition to their growing share of paid work.

In the formal economy, balancing a career and parenthood is but one of the major hurdles for women in all career paths. There are aspects that make balancing a career and parenthood uniquely challenging. The balance may be especially difficult when individuals are making the transition into advancing their careers and parenthood to flourish simultaneously. In addition, there are stresses related to time pressures, multiple roles and incompatible expectations, which can easily create work or family conflicts.

It is therefore important that we should acknowledge the role played by women who are striving to do their best in the difficult and slippery area of formal economy. The male-dominated economy and patriarchal society that women live in

has placed many obstacles on women in their quest to advance their careers, and improve their social status and economic plight.

This has a negative impact in the lives of women as they continuously struggle to create a balance between work and family.

I therefore appeal to women to work together and to organise others in our communities, especially those in the rural areas.

It is inconceivable in this day and age, that there is not a single woman who owns a mine in our beloved country, when we have a history of mining dating back over 105 years. Education, in general and women empowerment, in particular, can play a crucial role in bringing about this change.

Transnational social movements cannot democratise global political life on their own. The government alone cannot fight the power of transnational corporations. You need to assist us to neutralise and stabilise them to keep focus on what we want to achieve.

Transnationalism creates problems of accountability and of fairness. Just as it is wrong for an international company or any mining company to make profit in one country and export to another without benefiting the local communities, it is equally wrong for the few elite women of South Africa to front for foreign companies in name and at the expense of other women of South Africa.

Unfortunately this is the unintended consequence that creeps in when women are not well organised to exercise good governance over their organisations and projects. I should think that this is not the type of empowerment that we aspire to achieve. This chicanery defeats the very policies that are aimed at improving the lives of women.

We have to begin to realise that if we continue to work in silos, we will not only be robbing our children of the insight and direction that has been mapped by our government, but we would also be leading them to a world without of peace, stability and development.

As women we should begin to think beyond reflecting on what we have achieved and what we still need to achieve to what each and every one of us could do to contribute to the development of other women.

It is about time that women begin to take charge of their lives and think about their own mentorship programmes. It is widely understood that we learn skills, culture and values directly from other people, in particular, from those that we admire or to whom we can relate.

Women should take mentorship seriously as it provides opportunities to continuously develop skills and knowledge to enhance one's success. Although mentoring is always discussed in terms of the work environment, it can also have great benefits for all aspects of personal development.

This is a challenge for you and me, as I believe that as we are gathered here, we have success stories that we could relate. We need to break the walls that we have created around us and begin to share information with other women. We also need to realise that we need to continuously seek information so as to change the world for the better.

I thank you.