

**SPEECH PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY THE MINISTER IN
THE PRESIDENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR WOMEN, MS SUSAN
SHABANGU, MP, AT THE GENDER SUMMIT AFRICA, CICC,
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The Gender Summits – a global movement

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Programme Director

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Shisana

Panelists

Delegates

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

A great morning to you all, it is indeed a pleasure to be with you today.

2015 marks the fifth installment of the global Gender Summit which I am informed has been growing stronger over the years and has seen the scope of this important platform developing into Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America. It is perhaps an opportune time to reflect and to ponder upon that great question which was once posed by the renowned civil rights activist Dr Martin Luther King Jr. when he asked, "Where to from here ...?"

Gatherings of this nature should be platforms of critical analysis of the world we live in and the state of our science, with a view to sharply informing policy imperatives and

promoting the integration of gender and science to better advance our societies.

The Gender Summit Africa takes place at a time when the global community has just reflected on how far nations have come in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +20) which was adopted at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. At the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, countries reported on 12 thematic areas, all of which cry out for scientific support.

- Women and Poverty
- Education and Training for Women
- Women and Health
- Violence against Women
- Women and Armed Conflict
- Women and the Economy
- Women in Power and Decision Making
- Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
- Human Rights of Women
- Women and Media
- Women and the Environment
- The Girl-Child

Furthermore, the African Union, acknowledging that a lot still needs to be done in the Continent of Africa to bring women into the epicenter of development, has declared 2010-2020 the 'African Women's Decade' under the theme "Grassroots approach to gender equality and women's empowerment". In line with the theme of the African Women's Decade, the AU is focusing on 2015 as "*the Year of women's empowerment and development towards Africa's agenda 2063*".

The Africa's Agenda 2063 is a strategy aimed at optimizing the use of Africa resources for the benefit of all Africans. Through this strategic framework, the African continent will be able to learn from the lessons of the past, build on the progress now underway and strategically exploit possible opportunities available in the short, medium and long term so as to ensure

positive socio-economic transformation within the next 50 years.

The Africa Agenda 2063 also provides for 50% women representation in decision-making by 2020. The vision of Africa of 2063 is a Continent with full gender parity, with women occupying the center stage in all sectors relevant to the economy. The successful implementation of this strategic framework will go a long way in destroying the economic and political glass ceiling that restricts women's progress and integration into the economic mainstream.

The Gender Summit Africa also takes place at a strategic moment where the global community is intensifying efforts towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, moving towards the Sustainable Development Goals and shaping a post-2015 development agenda. Our department, the Department of Women located in the Presidency, as a nodal point for gender mainstreaming together with partners like you, must ensure that the outcome of the current global conversation takes a form of Sustainable Development Goals where we don't have a single goal that talks of women and gender, where we shaped an agenda of development goals in which gender is mainstreamed into every goal.

Programme director, gender equality is not limited to parity in political legislatures or the board rooms of business. The implementation of the AU framework will also mean an increased number of women in science, research and technology. But the number game is not an end in itself. The mindset of the women scientists, and indeed of their male counterparts, must shift to posing the gender question – If we look at the lives, needs and experiences of women, do we reach a different conclusion? – the pregnancy and safety belt design question. Including young women in science, technology, engineering and maths must go hand in hand with

asking what we are using science for, whose problems are we solving. This increase must not only exist for its own sake but as a measure of improving the lives of our people and changing the world to the better.

Amongst other things research processes should enrich our policy development processes e.g. in the fight against the scourge of poverty of which women are at the receiving end. Through the Gender Summit Africa we must develop innovative ways of fighting the feminization of poverty which is another manifestation of patriarchy. For example, how do we increase women access to agricultural land, to farm inputs, knowledge and implements, access to resources and funding, access to markets as part of a fight against poverty? How do we use opportunities created by technological innovations to assist integrating women in the mainstream agricultural value chain and economy as part of focusing on issues of food security?

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, poverty is experienced differently by women and men. Poverty for women tends to be more severe and poses greater challenges for women who bear the burden of caring for children under very difficult circumstances.

Factors that contributes to feminization of poverty include the growth of the female headed-households; the patriarchal inequalities; and the impact of economic policies that tend to leave women marginalized and in lower paid sectors of the economy.

According to the United Nations Development Programme women account for a growing percentage of the world's poor. About 70% of the world's poor are women.

Statistics South Africa released a study in 2014, titled the Gender Series: Volume 1: Economic Empowerment 2001-2014 focusing on gender disparities in economic empowerment and

providing more in-depth analysis and covering different focal areas related to gender. The areas indicated here are amongst some of the important aspects in the report.

Labour force participation of women in the economy can have an impact on raising the overall income for households. Raised income for women in turn increases their chances for better access to and control over resources, and can have a statistically significant impact on poverty reduction. The labour force participation rate of men was higher than that for women in both 2001 and in 2014. Even though both sexes are participating at lower rates in 2014 than in 2001, the gap between male and female participation rates remained stable over the reference period. Nationally, the labour force participation rates of both men and women were higher in 2001 than in 2014. The participation rate of men decreased from 67.4% in 2001 to 63.6% in 2014. The participation rate of women was 54.9% in 2001 and declined to 51.0% in 2014. The study also indicated that levels of employment increased by 2,5 million and men reported the highest increase of about 1,7 million, while the number of employed women only increased by 826 000.

I hope that the deliberations and recommendations of this summit will arm us better ahead of an important meeting of policy makers in the form of Heads of States and Ministers responsible for Gender and Women who will be meeting in our country in June.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Gender Summit as a global movement must have a developmental agenda that is aimed at making a difference in the lives of ordinary people. The Summit must be a platform for sharing best research practices within the field of science, technology and innovation. It is fascinating to hear scientists and researchers from very diverse countries finding the issues are the same while the context may be

different. Getting the girl child into science and maths education is as much an issue in South Africa as it is in the USA, but the context is clearly different. In countries where there are generations of women with tertiary education, to get a girl child to commit to science and maths is far different from the context where the parental generation may have basic literacy challenges – the strength though of a global movement is to explore these similarities and differences and find appropriate solutions.

This is particularly important for our country as we continue to deal with the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

For the purpose of this plenary and the overall theme of the summit I want to particularly zoom into an area of the Commission on the Status of Women reports that dealt with education and training for women, particularly as it relates to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields in the context of the situation here at home.

I am convinced the South African scenario mirrors in many aspects the situation across Africa and the world at large. My aim is to pose questions more than provide answers as I believe that gathered here is a core of intelligent minds who can boldly answer Dr King Jr. as he continues to ask a relevant question, "Where to from here ... ?" as it relates to the topic for this plenary: *Gender Summits - a global movement*.

As my colleague, the Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor alluded in her opening address yesterday, many research reports reveal that the presence of women in the fields of science, technology and innovation remains significantly lower than for men, even in some of the world's wealthiest regions.

The AU in its adoption of Agenda 2063 has committed to among other things, "Catalyse education and a skills revolution and actively promote science, technology, research and innovation, to build knowledge, human resources, capabilities and skills for the African century".

In South Africa the National Research and Development Strategy and the 2008 Ten Year Innovation Plan transformed the Science and Technology workforce which resulted in a more equitable representation of women and blacks in science and technology in particular. Following the implementation of these strategies, women enrolment in higher education increased from 48% in 1996 to 58% in 2012, the proportion of women in honours programmes from 44% to 49% and in doctoral programme from 38% to 44%. South Africa is the highest in Africa at 44% matched only by Tanzania although still below 50%.

The enrolment of women in science, engineering and technology fields increased from 43.8% in 2000 to 45% in 2012 and women graduation increased from 48.4% to 51% during this period. Guidelines on improving the distribution of bursaries and scholarship has set a target of 55% of support to post graduate to go to women and this has shown an improvement from under 50% in 2011/2012 to 53% in 2013- with women constituting 53% of all honours student and 49% of doctoral degrees .

Emphasising the importance of education, Kofi Annan the former Secretary General of the United Nations once said:

"Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rests the cornerstone of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development."

Despite efforts to give women greater access to education, women are still concentrated in certain disciplines other than

the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields, and most professions continue to be sex-segregated.

Does this mean that there is a problem with the selection criteria or the education system itself? Is there a lack of intellectual leadership and strategic direction for the infusion of diversity and equity throughout all aspects of teaching, learning, research, service, and outreach central to the science and technology institutions?

The fact that even with improved access to science and technology education, women have not increased their numbers in the workforce is indicative that access to education is not a solution or a panacea to all challenges facing women. It is only one part of what should be a multi-dimensional approach.

There is no simple solution, and special attention must be given to encouraging women and girls in all the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. For the law and its institutions to play a meaningful role in the fulfillment of the Constitutional vision of universal access to education and learning, we need to ensure systemic equality in all aspects of the law on education; and closing the gap between what the law says and access to education, especially the STEM fields.

The topic: *The Gender Summits – a global movement* requires the participants in this conference to ask themselves a few questions in order to determine the kind of movement that will ensure that the STEM fields embrace and leverage diversity in all of its forms - gender dimensions of science and technology – and that the recommendations from this conference get to have a lasting impact beyond these three days.

The questions are:

- If more women participated in STEM fields, what kind of difference would they make?

- What strategies should be employed to ensure that not only are women included in the STEM fields, but that they are empowered to be competitive and increasing women's access to and use of technology, including more gender-responsive products?
- What barriers exist to women's participation in science and technology employment?

The Gender Summits – a global movement should not be an ornamental platform that is reduced to phrases used to cloak ourselves with a vain sense of achievement, it should be to facilitate the harnessing of gender diversity which is essential for creativity and innovation.

How do we ensure that the gender summits are a force or a movement of women to reckon with, that will produce a diverse layered and healthy representation of women as role models to emulate, especially black women, in our respective countries?

The movement should allow women and girls to be able to proclaim their identities boldly and unapologetically and redesign the approach to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

Scientists are tackling the challenges of sustainable development by spurring innovation and economic growth. But is this sector depriving itself of the potential of women?

- How do we address the privileges associated with race and gender, even intra-gender?
- How does the women's movement address the appreciation by some girls that because of the skin and the body you are born in, society has placed you at the bottom of this hierarchy?

- How does the summit help women write their own scripts about their lives within science and technology

An article by the South African Women in Science and Engineering: "Why does South Africa need women in science and engineering?" indicates that Africa, including South Africa has a critical shortage of trained technology people. In 1980 North America had 2679 scientists and engineers involved in research and development per million populations; Latin America had 251; South Africa had only 49. In 1993, the USA had 7600 people per million involved in R & D, Japan had 7300. No figures are available for Africa. Increasing the number of technologically trained people, both men and women, is essential for development.

Utilization of the talents of women should not be viewed only from the perspective of gender equity. It must be understood that full involvement of women in scientific and technological efforts is today essential for rapid economic development and sustainable happiness. We must therefore ensure that more women are encouraged to enter the fields of science, technology and innovation as a mechanism of ensuring gender sensitive research.

A question that arises is: "does this imply that men are not capable of doing gender sensitive research?" Quite clearly, this is not necessarily the case, men are also capable of ensuring gender sensitive research. However, we need women to spearhead these processes and ensure their sustainability.

In conclusion, there are four urgent tasks facing the Gender Summit Africa:

- Develop innovative ways of supporting the implementation of the Africa Agenda 2063;
- Ensure that the Africa Agenda 2063 is researched-based and that the research is gender sensitive;

- Ensure that science, technology and innovation looks at Africa in a gender lens; and
- Train more African women in the fields of science, technology and innovation

I believe that these objectives are best taken forward through a global movement of scientists interested in gender analysis and in using science to answer the developmental questions that women face, particularly the challenges experienced by the poorest of the poor, in their daily lives.

Programme director, as I take my seat this morning, I do so confident that the summit will live up to expectations and will see the acceleration of shared responsibility of promoting gender sensitive science and promotion of research and innovation that impacts public policy, not just in African going forward, but in a global partnership reflected in the composition of this Summit.

I thank you.