

**REMARKS BY THE MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY
RESPONSIBLE FOR WOMEN, MS SUSAN SHABANGU, MP,
AT GENDER SUMMIT AFRICA MEDIA BRIEFING,
PRETORIA**

20 April 2015

Programme Director,
Human Sciences Research Council CEO, Professor Olive
Shisana;
Senior Officials from the HSRC,
Senior Officials from my Department,
Researchers and scientists,
Members of the media,

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

This first global Gender Summit to be hosted on African soil from 28 to 30 April at the Cape Town International Convention Centre will be taking place hot off the heels of 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59) which took place in New York last month.

The CSW59 meeting marked the 20 year review of progress countries have made in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +20).

The country report that we presented in New York indicated that there are major shifts in the status and conditions of women and that to some degree there is a narrowing of the gender gap. The transformation of power relations between women, men, institutions and laws, addressing gender oppression, patriarchy, sexism, racism, ageism, and structural oppression, and creating a conducive environment which enables women to take control of their lives still remains a mammoth task.

There was also consensus at an international level that achieving women's empowerment and their full and effective participation in all spheres of society is fundamental to the achievement of equality, development and peace.

Prof Shisana, I agree that in the main women remain underrepresented in key science fields and for a long time existing gender inequalities have ensured that men's ideas are prioritized over those of women.

This is why I believe the hosting of this Gender Summit Africa (GSA) is important and marks a critical turning point.

Africa has been used as a site and source of many research pursuits. Currently we are the world's fastest growing continent with an exceptional opportunity for economic growth and prosperity, mainly due to our natural and human resources.

Whilst African researchers have produced proven evidence that Africa has the capacity to produce research that has a social impact, employing varied scientific disciplines, such output of research has not been embedded in mainstream official statistics domains that inform policy.

The GSA is one of the important platforms to stimulate meaningful conversations that will ensure that Africa's research agenda is strengthened as we reflect on how our science, technology, infrastructure, capital, skills and importantly data could be used to realize the continent's full potential for the benefit of its entire people.

When South Africa won the bid to co-host the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope antenna, it was a giant achievement in engineering and science arena. The telescope is designed to conduct groundbreaking science once completed in 2016. South Africa with eight partner countries (Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Madagascar and Mauritius) is hosting the major portion of the SKA.

Thus, the GSA is held with a view to reflect on the past, current and future sciences and pose questions related to how women have and could be afforded opportunities to fully partake and make a significant contribution to the various sciences, as well as benefit from the scientific advances made. GSA is also cognisant of the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) education if Africa is to support

its fast growing economy and possibly be a leading innovation economy in the near future.

We hope that the hosting of the GSA conference will indeed see groups and organizations across all levels of scientific research, including research beneficiaries addressing issue issues of mutual concern. This is an opportunity for exchanging and analysing experiences of conducting research in various research settings where addressing gender inequalities will lead to better quality outcomes for all.

I thank you.