

**SPEECH PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY THE MINISTER IN
THE PRESIDENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR WOMEN, MS SUSAN
SHABANGU, MP, AT THE GENDER SUMMIT AFRICA
MINISTERIAL GALA DINNER, CAPE TOWN**

28 April 2015

Programme Director and the Deputy-Director General:
International Cooperation and Resources at DST, Daan du Toit;
My colleague the Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi
Pandor,
Human Sciences Research Council CEO, Professor Olive
Shisana;
Gender Activists,
Researchers and scientists,
Members of the media,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening to all of you.

Can I humbly request all of us to pause for a short while and
observe a moment of silent prayer as we reflect on the recent
spate of attacks against foreign nationals.

Thank you.

I would like to further extend heartfelt condolences to the families that have lost their loved ones. May those who were injured experience a speedy recovery.

We again reiterate the message of the South African government and the sentiment shared by millions of our people that there can be no justification for the inhumane acts we have witnessed recently against fellow human beings. We condemn these atrocious and criminal acts and firmly stand against all forms of intolerance. We appeal to our communities, South Africans and foreign nationals alike, to respect human life, human rights and human dignity and embrace the spirit of Ubuntu which has come to characterise the new democratic South Africa. We believe that as women and gender activists we have a responsibility to lead in the building of peace and harmony in our diversity.

The unfortunate incidents of attacks happen at a time when the Continent is about to celebrate Africa Month in May. Through the #WeAreAfrica campaign being led by the South African government working together with various sectors of society, let us use this opportunity to constructively engage one another and reflect on the current political and socio-cultural challenges facing Africans. We should promote dialogue as a way of resolving disputes and find ways to foster peaceful co-existence in communities.

Programme director,

Allow me to thank you sincerely for choosing South Africa as the host country for your 5th Gender Summit and the 1st Gender Summit to be held on African soil. Let me also express my appreciation to the organizers of the Gender Summit Africa for choosing a theme that is at the heart of the challenges faced by our continent.

In the context of the theme: *Poverty alleviation and economic empowerment through scientific research and innovation: Better Knowledge From and For Africa* and in the light of the political and socio-cultural challenges facing Africa the question that arises is: How does scientific research enable us to better respond to the challenge of ensuring gender equality in the context of the feminisation of poverty?

I raise this issue because the purpose of understanding the world is to change it. Our understanding of the world we live in and its challenges should propel us to develop innovative ways of dealing with those challenges. Science and research embodies utilisation of all knowledge and must include the enhancing of indigenous knowledge in the name of change or development. Development must take into consideration and

build on the scientific mechanisms that women have used to build communities and families.

For example when you go to rural areas women have long been employing energy efficient ways of building and maintaining their huts using things like cow dung and straw bale to regulate the household temperature so that in winter the hut can retain heat and in summer coolness. This indigenous scientific knowledge was put to great use in the City of Ekurhuleni when a multi-million rand energy-efficient OR Tambo Cultural Precinct was built. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and an essential precondition for realising a gender equitable society, and yet de facto gender equality remains a challenge in many sectors of society globally. The science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields are no exception. Research evidence still shows that contrary to the often held assumption that science is gender-neutral actually the opposite is true. Science knowledge has more evidence for men than for women. It is a case of the lions not having their own historians and as such the history of the hunt always glorifying the hunters. The use of the gender lens in science, technology, engineering and mathematics is a sure way of accelerating the realisation of the continent's full potential for the benefit of its entire people.

It is important to strengthen the role of women in mainstream science and technology and highlight the importance of the traditional knowledge that women bring to these fields.

Equally important is addressing the issue of women's limited access to training, changing the attitudes towards women's roles in science and technology on the part of men and most importantly on women themselves.

According to a report developed for the Global Alliance for Diversifying the Science and Engineering Workforce by the American Association for the Advancement of Science "An essential step in this process is to highlight the significant role that women have always played in advancing scientific knowledge and technological innovation. Though historically women have played an important part in ... technological revolutions, their relatively low status in society prevented them from gaining fame or benefit from their innovations.

"Because women were unable to take out patents many had their male relatives or acquaintances take credit for their work. We need to highlight women's lost heritage as technological innovators to erase the myth that they are not good at or interested in science and technology," states the report.

This Summit takes place at a time when South Africa is preparing to host the AU Summit of Head of States to be held

in June 2015. The AU will host two meetings on women: 2nd High Level Panel on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the meeting of AU Ministers in charge of gender and women as part of this Summit. The focus of the High Level Panel is to enable women's empowerment in the agricultural sector and the resourcing of this strategy. This will provide an opportunity to engage on gender responsive budgeting principles to ensure financial inclusion of women within and beyond agribusiness.

As you converge here our expectation as a country, and of course, the people of this continent is that your discussions will assist us in dealing with complex challenges facing our continent, especially with regards to systematic dismantling of patriarchy, ensuring gender mainstreaming in all legislative frameworks, policies, plans and budgets of our various governments and the private sector for women empowerment and gender equality.

We move from a premise that one of the leading instruments in socio-economic development is evidence derived from science and technology and thus scientific and technological activities play a decisive role in improved productivity and output. Today, science and technology is part of and a major determinant of the economic sector. It brings together the elements needed to form the basic plant, creating a series of

products to meet the needs of every object for manufacturing and trading.

Thus my department, the Department of Women, located in the Presidency, has been created to play a central role in ensuring that gender mainstreaming in the public, private and civil society sectors is institutionalised and that we are able to pursue an informed research agenda through collaboration with partners like you. This will allow us to look at existing gaps in the current mechanism for women empowerment and gender equality and make the necessary policy interventions.

In conclusion, while there is no doubt that African researchers continue to produce proven evidence that Africa has the capacity to yield research that has a social impact, employing varied scientific disciplines, the next step though, is that such output of research needs to be embedded in mainstream official statistics domains that inform policy and as we embed this in official statistics, the gender disaggregation of statistics must enable the gender lens of scientific research, technology development and innovation.

I wish you fruitful deliberations

I thank you.