

**REMARKS BY THE CHAIR OF THE GENDER SUMMIT
AFRICA AND CEO OF THE HSRC, PROF OLIVE SHISANA
AT THE GENDER SUMMIT AFRICA MEDIA BRIEFING**

20 APRIL 2015, PRETORIA

Programme Director

The Honourable Minister in the Presidency responsible for
Women, Ms Susan Shabangu

Senior officials of her Department

Senior officials of the GCIS – who are our host for today

Senior Officials of the HSRC

Researchers and scientists

Members of the Media (here and in Cape Town)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon

Thank you for coming. We have 8 days to go before the start of
the first global Gender Summit on the African continent relating

to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in Cape Town from 28 – 30 April 2015.

The **Theme is:** “Poverty alleviation and economic empowerment through scientific research & innovation: Better Knowledge From and For Africa.”

The Gender Summits are convened with the objective of promoting the integration of gender and science to better advance societies. It is opportune that the Gender Summit is being held this year in Africa, a continent that is rising economically. Six out of the ten fastest growing economies in the world are located in Africa. With a large youth dividend and abundant natural resources, Africa has an opportunity to use science to further identify approaches for poverty reduction and provide economic empowerment to its citizens. Such opportunities come with the obligation to consider social issues in scientific research, such as gender, sexuality, race, class, and ability, to ensure that future scientific innovations are not only inclusionary but also successful.

At this summit, we plan to work together towards a better future for women, men, transgender and gender non-conforming persons of this continent as we further interrogate the use of the gender lens in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to unpack our continent's potential to uplift our people. Arising from this exercise should be a gender policy charter for scientific research, which will serve as a guide to encourage those engaged in STEM to take into account the needs of women and men, as well as transgender and gender non-conforming persons. This Summit is an opportunity not only to strengthen the research collaboration among scientists and stakeholders working in the STEM disciplines, but also to accelerate the promotion of gender sensitive science that has a potential to influence policy. It is for that reason that the Gender Summit partners include academics, policy makers, funding agencies and civil society.

The four thematic areas of the Gender Summit are: gender and scientific research, gender expertise and people, gender and science systems and finally gender and societal and economic

development. Collectively these thematic areas will encourage participants to explore international experiences on the benefits of including gender and diversity in STEM research, to apply gender analytic tools to improve science and consequently people's lives, to examine the influence of funders on the direction of research strategies and priorities, and finally to generate ideas for building Africa's human capital in STEM. All of these programs will contribute to the overall theme of "Quality Research and Innovation through Equality" and the goals of poverty alleviation and economic empowerment through gender sensitive research and innovation.

The Gender Summit was established in 2011 as a platform for dialogue where scientists, policy makers and gender scholars can jointly examine the evidence and establish consensus what improvements were needed to address common problems. In 2013, the National Science Foundation in the USA has led a partnership of key research funding organisations in the region to create Gender Summit 3 – North America. In 2015, there will be three summit events, an introduction of Gender Summit

– Asia Pacific in Seoul, South Korea from 26 -28 August 2015, and our Gender Summit – Africa, and the continuation of the Gender Summit – Europe in Berlin, Germany from 6-7 November 2015.

The next Gender Summit – North America will be in Mexico in April 2016, and then in Canada in November 2017. Changing cultures and societal attitudes that undervalue women will be easier by using a gender aware and responsive science as the driver and the global Gender Summit community as agents of change.

The conveners of this Gender Summit are the South African Human Sciences Research Council, the South African Department of Science and Technology, led by honourable Minister Naledi Pandor, the South African Presidency, represented by the honourable Minister of Women, Ms Susan Shabangu, the Portia Gender and Science Summit, the National Research Foundation, the National Science Foundation and Howard University. We are grateful for the financial

contributions of the conveners as well as of Elsevier, Wellcome Trust, Anglo American and Statistics South Africa.

On behalf of the conveners, I would like to welcome all delegates from all over the world and indeed from our continent to Cape Town in 8-days-time. We are looking forward to have this opportunity to share with you and learn from colleagues attending this summit. We are also looking forward to hosting the members of the media at the Summit. It is important to capture the broad discussions and important deliberations that would culminate into a charter at the end of the Summit.

Professor Olive Shisana, BA (SS), MA, Sc.D

Conference Chairperson