

**SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF MATJHABENG MUNICIPALITY,
ME MATHABO MOKAPO, ON THE OCCASION “WOMEN IN ROAD SAFETY –
WOMEN IN ACTION’ CAMPAIGN-23rd August 2006.**

Programme Director
Honourable Councillors
Commissioned and Non Commissioned Members of SAPS
Members of the Department of Transport
Members of the Department of Correctional Service
Members of the Department of Justice
Members of the Provincial Traffic Department
Members of the Emergency Medical Services
Members of the Moving Violations Systems
Members of the Matjhabeng Department of Public Safety and Transport
Members of the Media
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

I wish to extend a word of warm welcome to you all, to this lunch that has been organized in honor of all the detachments that participated in the manning of roadblocks, for the campaign “Women in Road Safety – Women in Action.”

The Matjhabeng Municipality, as a custodian of this project, wishes to thank all stakeholders who played various roles to ensure that the programme/project becomes the wonderful success that it was.

When we, as a municipality conceptualized this project of women in road safety, our thoughts were triggered by the fact that, as a nation we are celebrating Women’s Month and it is therefore imperative that we make the community of Matjhabeng aware about the plight of women in road safety and the nation at large.

Just over the past weekend, we received reports about the worst carnage on South African roads. Lessons to be drawn from incidents/accidents of this nature, is the fact that as a nation we need to take the “Arrive Alive” Campaign to new heights, so that its message and content is carried across the spectrum of all road users.

The Campaign that we undertook this morning coincides with the wide ranging celebrations across the country, of the August 9th march on the Union Buildings, in Pretoria. This march, which was undertaken by thousands of women in protest against the extension of pass law to women and apartheid laws in general, can be characterized as a culmination of a climax in the struggles that were waged by women in our country. This march, by women across the color-line helped to reinforce the unity of women and strengthen the principle and practice of non racial organization.

Since the advent of our new democracy the ideals and aspirations of the women who marched to Pretoria, have been gradually realized. The new democratic constitution guarantees equal rights for women and further places a responsibility on government and on society to redress the discriminatory laws and practices which affected women over many decades.

In this light, the ANC-led government has passed numerous laws, policies and created institutions that seek to better the lives of women of South Africa and all our people.

Despite the positive changes that were brought about since the democratic breakthrough of 1994, women still continue to face serious challenges:

- Women continue to struggle for housing, security and comfort.
- Women (especially black and rural) continue to face challenges of access to credit, ownership of land, educational opportunities and skills development.
- Women are the strata that are mostly affected by the divide between the two economies that is characteristic of the South African economy.
- Women continue to face challenges with regard to underdevelopment, unemployment, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

Statistics to date, in various employment sectors, reveal that the majority of women continue to occupy junior positions in the hierarchy of employment and few are found occupying senior management positions. This trend, dictates that as women employees in the different sectors, we must ensure that we equip ourselves with the necessary skills that will enable us to ascend the hierarchy.

Women employees must take advantage of programmes initiated by government in the form of JIPSA, which is essentially meant to enhance the quality of skills in our workforce.

Our women should ensure that they empower themselves with skills that will see them move away from the periphery of our economy. This will also assist those engaged in unstable marriages to have options that will see them being able to sustain themselves economically, in the event of divorce or separation.

Women who are engaged with community work or those of us who work for public institutions continue to face challenges that relate to the socialization process of our society. They encounter problems that relate to attitudes inherently connected with our past. I therefore call upon all women employees in the public service to confront these challenges with the necessary vigor, assertiveness, composure and confidence.

The challenges outlined above and many more that continue to engulf our society in its road to a non-racial, democratic and non sexist future, dictate that as women we should pick up the spear and emulate the women marchers of 1956, in all areas of human endeavor.

Conclusion

To all the women who are gathered here, from various public institutions: My message is that the “Sky is the limit”, in all your areas of human endeavor. I sincerely encourage you to undertake studies in specialized fields that were predominantly the domain of men, so that the gender imbalances that are a creation of our past, are redressed. In explicit terms I am calling upon all of us women in public and private sectors to consciously engage in a “Skills Revolution”, so as to ensure that South African women occupy the right place in the family of nations.

Let us at all times be clinical and ethical in all the work that we do, so that we earn the respect of our male counterparts.

At this point I wish to commend the partnership that was demonstrated by all stakeholders in our campaign today. The President of our country, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, always emphasizes the need for partnerships and an integrated approach in our efforts to create a better life for all, and I am convinced that the campaign we undertook today, will serve as a motivation to all stakeholders to nurture and harness these partnerships.

Thank you.

**MATHABO MOKAPO
EXECUTIVE MAYOR**