

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE**

**MAUREEN MODISELLE**

**ON BEHALF OF THE**

**HONOURABLE PREMIER OF THE NORTH WEST**

**PROVINCE**

**AT THE WOMEN'S DAY COMMEMORATION**

**BY THE PUBLIC PROTECTOR IN BRITS**

**08 AUGUST 2008**

As one of the chapter nine institutions the public protector has the constitutional mandate to ensure that every South African and persons living in South Africa are protected from abuse by particularly the state. This institution together with others is described as the institutions that support our constitutional democracy.

I therefore, Programme director have to begin by thanking the Public Protector for organizing this commemoration in our province, which is mostly rural. This point about the rural nature of our Province I shall come back to later in my address.

In one of his renowned novels; Wizard of the Crow, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O paints this picture about the general law of statehood and political office and I quote "State and secret often go together. The secrets are known only to a few called secretaries in some countries and ministers in others".

The role of the Public Protector among many is that it has to protect citizens to the craft of state secrecy that might otherwise affect the citizens' rights of access to information.

Because the role of this important institution is not only to investigate government; it has therefore to ensure that it reaches out to our people especially the rural poor; so that they too can know and exercise their rights.

One of the roles given to the Public Protector is to ensure that the public is adequately protected from the wrath of the powerful. Therefore programme director the Public Protector has a role to play in order to ensure that the public is educated about its role as one of the statutory watchdogs for public protection.

It has to ensure that particularly the down trodden in society receive the services due to them by those whom they placed in power.

The public protector has to ensure that those in positions of responsibility do not abuse and pillage the positions of trust they hold. If the public protector fails in his/her responsibility it would have not added value to the whole notion of constitutionalism.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there can be a constitution in place but the very constitution can lack constitutionality because of lack of rigorous implementation by the government.

As we commemorate this women's day we should always remind ourselves about the role played by those thousands of women who gathered at the Union buildings five decades ago.

What they sought was to build a society in which all would live without any fear of coercion. They sought to ensure that we who inherit what they fought for; would be able to preserve and protect what they have achieved.

Those women who are our mothers, sisters and grandmothers, did not fight for the emancipation of a select few women who are educated and occupy managerial posts in government and the private sector. They fought for the emancipation of all women, including women from poor and rural backgrounds; so that they too can have an opportunity to break from the bondages of the dehumanizing and harrowing poverty.

One of the outstanding revolutionaries of our continent; Amílcar Cabral once said the most quoted statement that is sometimes reduced to a cliché; “Tell no lies, claim no easy victory”.

I am certain Public Protector that our claim that since 1994 the lives of women in our country has improved. We would not be claiming an easy victory because in accepting that this is the case; we also accept that we still have a long way to go.

The economic sector is still dominated by white males and thus remains relatively untransformed. The academia is also hugely populated by white males. This is the situation in many other segments of our society.

That is why we have confidence in the limitation of the power of the state and the government that runs that state. That limitation of powers can be guaranteed by the effective institution of the Public Protector and all other chapter 9 institutions.

Government if not properly monitored can do things that would render the constitution useless and that is where the Public Protector comes into the picture. This holds true necessarily because the constitution is the only protection the poor and downtrodden have against the powerful.

In the instance that we do not protect our constitution and seek to implement its provisions; we run the risk of an outbreak of war. The creation of lawlessness, which would impinge negatively on the status of women.

This is why we should use this women's day commemoration to raise awareness about the adverse effects of having a constitution and have no sense of constitutionalism. Necessarily because in the absence of the constitutional provisions of those basic rights the people who are the first to suffer from lawlessness are women and children.

Therefore we should Public Protector, ensure that key to the pursuit of your constitutional mandate is a deliberate target to women.

As an institution that supports constitutional democracy, you should and must ensure that you not only wait for complaints from the public but are proactive and teach women about their rights and responsibilities.

In this way I am certain that you would be ensuring an all round access to the Public Protector as an institution. This access would ensure that women receive the all important legal assistance from your good office.

As I conclude I want to thank the office of the Public Protector in arranging this event. This shows the importance of this day.

Lastly I want to wish you well in your endeavours as an institution;

In addressing women's issues across all sections of society and the challenges those women still face in advancing the agenda on Gender Equality.

I thank you

Kea Leboga