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MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS ON THE
OCCASION OF THE 57TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PAN AFRICAN
WOMEN’S ORGANISATION (PAWO), DIRCO

“The Africa we want, FOR the women of Africa, BY the
women of Africa”

Secretary General of the Pan African Women’s Organisation and Deputy
Minister of Communications Ms. Pinky Kekana

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen
It is such a humbling feeling to be standing here before you on the occasion of the celebration of the 57\textsuperscript{th} birthday of the Pan African Women’s Organisation. PAWO, formed back in 1962, was created as a vehicle to unite the women of the continent of Africa through creating a single platform to promote good governance and joint initiatives to support and eliminate all forms of discrimination, especially against women. At its founding the objectives of PAWO were defined as “to prosecute the struggle for recognition and application of the right of African women to participate in decision making in the fields of political, economic, cultural and social life, both at national and international levels and particularly, to be able to express their opinion in bills envisaging the welfare of women and children before and after they are debated in parliament; to follow the evolution and to contribute to the improvement of the situation of African women by collecting that on the economic, political and socio-cultural aspects; support actions taken at national and international levels aimed at eliminating flagrant violation of human rights; most importantly for today’s conference, “to establish continuous relations of friendship and cooperation between Africa and women all over the world, and also “to support internal cooperation and participate in all activities for disarmament and reinforcement of peace worldwide”. Since then we must applaud the fact that the Pan African Women’s Organisation is a specialized agency of the African Union and therefore participates in all aspects of her deliberations, including the formulation of the various protocols and extent to which they affect women and children.
The context of the time in which the Pan African Women’s Organisation was born speaks to the era of struggles for liberation and independence on the African continent. At the time, our continent was almost totally still under colonialism and apartheid. It is worth noting that it was formed even before the formation of the Organisation of African Unity, OAU in May 1963. In the same way, the Women’s Charter preceded the Freedom Charter.

Our association with PAWO dates back to when we were in our struggle for liberation. I cannot but remember with fondness my time in Luanda, Angola as a young woman combatant and the association the PAWO offices there over thirty years ago. This was to continue when I was redeployed to Lusaka and worked closely with our women leaders, such as izithwalandwe Mme Ruth Mompati, and Gertrude Shope, to mention but a few. In addition, the involvement of many women inside the country, such as Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Rita Ndzanga, Bertha Gxowa and many others, all proved a beacon to our struggle ensuring women take up the cudgels in the struggle for emancipation. We have the responsibility to appreciate where they come from and what they went through for us to be where we are. Twenty five years on with South Africa having achieved her freedom, where are we with progress on meeting the objectives and mission of the Pan African Women’s Organisation? Beyond South Africa, a similar question may be asked about the extent to which progress has been made. The African Union has, through Agenda 2063, in particular Aspiration number 6 and Goal 17. These respectively aspire for “An Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential offered
by African people, especially its Women and Youth, and caring for children”. The goals and priority areas highlight full gender equality in all spheres of life, and women and girls empowerment; violence and discrimination against women and girls”. These are very important milestones towards the achievement of Agenda 2063.

As women in the struggle, PAWO gave us hope and provided an opportunity for us to meet women from other parts of the continent who were also involved in the struggles for women emancipation in their countries. Our ANC Women’s Section played a critical role in building and strengthening these partnership and took pride in the support received from fraternal organisations of women. This epitomized what the PAWO President Assetou Koite said, that “Africa must recognize and honour the contribution of women to the decolonization of the continent and take action to advance gender equality. She further said that “our continent is historically has been blessed with numerous female revolutionaries. Moreover, what is evident is that PAWO has become a transnational feminist movement. This movement has been instrumental in forging international consensus on a rights-based approach to women’s rights”, Kote said during Pan African Women’s day in 2018.

On silencing the guns: the AU resolution as a roadmap to end the conflict and silence the guns in an effort to end the wars on our continent by 2020…the impact of war on women and children in a conflict ridden continent”. For our part South Africa has taken the lead in conflict prevention, management and resolution through the various structures of the United Nations, African Union and the Southern African Development
Community, SADC. In this regard our country has been integral in the formulation of the African Peace and Security Agenda. Even as this is the case, it is recognized that the building and operationalization of the African Standby force will have its challenges. It should also be noted that military action alone will not be sufficient to ensure peace and stability in the region. There is a need for parallel action on the social and economic fronts.

As we mark the 57th anniversary of the pawo, let us rededicate ourselves to the strengthening of this, our organisation and make it reach greater heights.

I thank you.