

**ADDRESS BY HON. NN MAPISA-NQAKULA, RSA MINISTER OF  
DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL SANDF WOMEN'S  
PARADE  
THABA TSHWANE SPORTS GROUND, PRETORIA  
24 AUGUST 2012**

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Programme Director

Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans

Secretary for Defence,

Chief of the SANDF,

Director General of the Department of Military Veterans,

Members of the Plenary Defence Staff Council

Members of the Military Command Council

Generals, Officers, Warrant Officers, Non Commissioned Officers

Members on the Parade.

Distinguished guests,

Members of the media.

Friends and Colleagues

Last week on from Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup> to Thursday, the 16<sup>th</sup> of August a dark cloud befell our country when unrests at the Lonmill mine in Marikana claimed the lives of 44 people and left many more injured and hundreds destitute.

I would like before my address to this parade, to ask that we rise and observe a moment of silent in honour of those who lost their lives.

To all our guests, I am honoured that you have taken time out of your busy schedule to join us at this auspicious occasion and to witness the second Women's Parade of the SA National Defence Force. Since its inaugural year the parade has become an important event in the calendar of the South African National Defence Force to be held every year marking the apex of our celebration of women's month during month of August.

This address to you, may for all intents and purposes be regarded as my maiden speech in a DOD event, save for the time when I spoke at a joint event of both the DOD and the Department of Military Veterans earlier this month.

Today, not only do we gather here to celebrate our women in uniform, but we also remember and honour all women of our country. We do this, in part, as a commemoration of the heroic contribution made by generations of women who contributed to our struggle for freedom. These heroines include those who marched on the Union Building here in Pretoria in 1956 and those who actively fought in combat in the armed conflict for the liberation of our country. The presence of women in our military today, is as a result of the pioneering efforts of those brave women.

We keep the memory of their contribution alive because although they lived in a different time, and faced different struggles, they like you, took to the calling to selflessly serve their country. Many of them laid down their lives for the good of the generations to come.

Your calling, just like theirs, still remains that of securing the future of this country for generations to come. Just as they made their contribution in order for us to be here as women, so shall we be expected to do the same for the future generations of women who will join our Defence Force.

Why do we celebrate women?

Because both in national context, and specifically in the context of the military, women have come a long way. We have come a long way since the first and second world wars when women were first invited into the military to provide auxiliary services to relieve men for combat and operational duty.

We celebrate women because of the progress our country has made in the advancement of women. We do so, not oblivious of the challenges that still lie ahead, but in the knowledge that the progress we have made so far, has brought both hope and opportunity for women.

We must take pride in the progress we have made in our transformation agenda. To date the SANDF has the largest contingency of women in our deployments in the country and the continent and this has been acknowledged by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Office.

This parade therefore also serves to celebrate and acknowledge the progress made by our Defence Force in promoting the contribution of women within the military.

Having said that, I know we are still a long way from addressing all the challenges. Although women have risen to various senior positions, including as heads of units, we still have very little presence at the highest level of commanding structures our Force.

Where we have made progress in the inclusion of women for peace keeping deployments outside our borders, we still fail to provide them with amenities for their special needs, including provision for privacy and sanitary requirements. These are some of the quick wins that as a department we can correct in the immediate and I have already indicated to the Council on Defence that I want it done during this month of August.

Because it has historically been regarded as a male dominated environment, the military has a special role in championing society's perception of women. The SANDF has a unique opportunity to demonstrate that women are as much capable to contribute and lead our society.

Over the recent years, the SANDF has, in naming its fleet of naval vessels and submarines, made a deliberate choice of names of heroines who led by example. These brave women who left us a legacy of the true meaning of courage, sacrifice and determination, are an example we should emulate. Amongst them, Charlotte Maxeke, Lillian Ngoyi, Ruth First and Victoria Mxenge.

Not only did these women and many others fight in the struggle for freedom, but they were also community activists who were simultaneously concerned with development issues in their communities.

Their example is what the Defence Force of a democratic South Africa should emulate.

We need a Defence Force that will use its capacity, skills and knowledge in supporting development in our communities. As the current generation of our Defence Force, you are called upon find your space in making a difference in your workplaces, schools, homes and communities in order not to undermine the sacrifices made by the architects of our freedom and democracy. Rightfully so, they earned their space in the history books; now it is your chance to carry the torch by asserting yourselves in building your own legacy. I am extending you an invitation to join them in this distinction.

Occasions like these must be held on a regular basis in our military in recognition of our women in uniform. They are the best way of publicly showing appreciation to our soldiers for excellence and providing much needed support and motivation. These events also serve to reflect the pride and honour of our women in uniform and the organisation as a whole.

We reaffirm our commitment to women emancipation in the DOD, and we acknowledge that more visible transformation still needs to take place for us to achieve our set targets authentically.

Today, through this parade, we renew the pledge of women of 1956, and commit to continue to fight for their vision of a non-sexist and non-racial society in which women are equal and active partners in building the new South Africa.

My own experience has taught me that there is no limit to what women can do — given equal opportunities and access to resources. I also know the importance of role models in entering new fields.

The most recent appointment of my Cabinet colleague and comrade, Minister of Home Affairs, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as the Chairperson of the African Union, making her the first woman to hold the post, is a vivid and best example that indeed hard work and determination do pay off.

I want to thank all of our women in our organisation for your loyalty and commitment to our country.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to your families and loved ones who have supported you in carrying out your duties.

Let me extend my congratulations to all the women from different services that stand before us on this parade. As a former uniform member myself, I am especially pleased to witness the efforts being made to increase women's recruitment and participation in defence of our country and its people.

To all the women in uniform here today, please know that you stand as a strong example for others to follow, not only in this country but in the continent as a whole. Wear your uniform with pride and patriotism, as you took the ultimate pledge to serve your country with your lives, indeed you are a special kind of servants

Malibongwe igama lamakhosikazi. Makabongwe onke amakhosikazi!

I thank you.