

**MINISTRY**

**SPORT AND RECREATION**

## REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**MINISTER OF SPORT & RECREATION Ms TOKOZILE XASA (MP) SPEAKS ON THE WOMEN AND SPORT POLICY. UMTATA, EASTERN CAPE.**

**FRIDAY, 12 APRIL 2019**

Programme Director

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I must first send my appreciation to the Chief Operations Officer, Mrs Khan for driving this process with women from our department of Sport & Recreation SA. The Sport Confederation and other women who have displayed active involvement and interest in matters dealing with women and sport, we remain forever indebted to you.

As a Country we have done a lot to fulfil the commitment to end discrimination against women and to make sure women play an equal role in society. All laws that discriminate have been scrapped and women have equal access in law to education, jobs and opportunities but societal relations still persist to oppress women because of their race, their class and their gender. Society judge women as incapable until they prove that they are capable, whilst judge men as capable until they prove themselves incapable. Therefore we are gathered here to address this societal abnormality. We are driven and guided by the values of our nation, that of creating a non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous society. We therefore hope to continue to improve women’s representation in management, governance and in the field of play through this policy. This policy must enable women to challenge and change sexist attitudes and make it easier for women to report abuse in sport.

The department of Sport & Recreation directed by Commission on Gender Equity of 2016, mandates it to introduce educational awareness activities to promote sport for the girl-child and to address gender equity in sport. That the department must in its plan indicate the need to promote and support women in sport, and put measures in place to address gender disparity in sporting codes and structures. That the department must put quotas systems in place to ensure all sports are accessible to women and girl-children.

We are therefore called upon to undermine the likes of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics when he said in 1896, “***No matter how toughened a sportswomen may be, her organism is not cut out to sustain certain shocks.”*** Such stereotypes do encourage gender-based discrimination in sport. Unfortunately 123 years later our very own Caster Semenya is facing similar discrimination that her womanhood is under scrutiny and her rights are being violated. I must thank people of the World through the United Nations for Human Rights Commission for standing with Caster and people of South Africa in their unwavering support for the daughter of the soil.

We are here to consult critical stakeholders on the formulation of the women and sport policy that seek to promote gender equality in the area of sport and Recreation. The policy development process was also shared with delegates at a women’s breakfast in August 2018, when I said amongst other things. *“As we craft the Women in sport policy, the policy should address itself to:*

* *Incentives for companies sponsoring women in sport in the form of higher tax rebate.*
* *Recognition & accolades for companies sponsoring women sport in the form of Awards & Annual recognition certificate.*
* *Lobby ICASA for Sport Broadcasting Regulations to include a system for women sport coverage.*
* *Issuing Ministerial Directives in line with the findings of the Transformation Report (EPG) and enforcing the directives by linking annual findings to their achievements.”*

At the end we hope that the policy will cater for all women and girls in sport irrespective of race, class, geographical location. We hope that this policy will further contribute to Social Cohesion, inclusion and reduce inequality and disparities based on gender, class and race. That women through this policy will choose a healthy lifestyle, as sport helps one to stay healthy and reduce obesity. We hope through this policy talented women participating in sport may start to earn an income when they compete at a professional level.

We have travelled a long road to respond to gender-based challenges in sport but more still needs to be done. Netball which is one major sport for women has a semi-professional league, a total of 300 players per financial year participate. Premier Hockey League caters for both female and male players. The department continues to provide both financial and technical support to South African Hockey Association and it has secured broadcasting rights. Of significance male and female players are paid the same stipends. With the top three most popular sporting codes, Cricket, Football and Rugby, the federations continue receiving funding allocations specifically aimed at creating participation opportunities for women.

Currently we have two (2) female Federation Presidents, five female (5) CEOs, and four (4) federations have 50% or more women in their boards. Women currently constitute 49% of medical and scientific specialist support, but the environment they operate in remain unstructured, practitioners are approached on an individual basis by federations.

It is in schools where teachers of physical education must encourage equal participation of girls and boys in sport programmes. The department has done well in gender parity in schools, in the past five (5) financial years, the number of girls participating in sport is 51%, but we need these figures to be reflected in competitive sport.

There is a direct correlation between broadcast coverage and commercial funding of codes from the private sector. Without broadcasting hours, codes have no or little chance to become financially self-sufficient. Financial sustainability required for survival and development of sporting codes is to a large extent a function of broadcasting coverage. There are many great sportswomen and some of them are best in their sporting codes, yet we hear little about their achievements. Media is the driver for sponsorship, we need more females covered by media so they can have sustainable livelihood.

I must applaud the success of Banyana Banyana, they have drawn the attention of the country in women sport. Banyana Banyana are starting to attract more followers as a result they use bigger stadiums and broadcasters are starting to show their games. We must equally applaud SASOL for being there for Banyana Banyana, these are the kind of companies we need to support women sport, those that grow with the sport.

As a department we are encouraged by the number of South Africans who have chosen to be physically active, there are more women who participate in 5km and 10km fun runs, this must be encouraged, however we must create a conducive environment for women to keep active. Crime remains a serious deterrent for women in sport. We must provide more outdoor gyms in communities to increase access to sport facilities for women.

In conclusion, I must thank women who have been trail blazers in sport, they have created a base for our young girls to emulate, because of them our girls they too believe they can do it. As a nation we will always be highly indebted to the likes of Portia Modise, A former player of the Women’s football team, she is the first African female player to reach the 100th goal scored for the national team. Caster Semenya, Our golden girl, she is a double and triple world champion in the 800m distance and many achievements. Kass Naidoo, She is the first female cricket commentator, brains behind **GSPORTFORGIRLS** an online women’s sport news. And many women who have done well for our nation that I could not mention. These are women who have been torch-bears, those who have been in the cold front of women struggles in sport, who undermined the cultural logic of patriarchy in sport.

I hope through this policy we will produce more role models for our girls. Young girls need to see sport as an essential part of their lives, and having women in leadership roles to look up to will inspire and motivate them.

**We must make Women excellence in sport a NORM instead of an EXCEPTION.**

I thank you