



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

KEYNOTE STATEMENT

BY

RIGHT HONOURABLE SAARA KUUGONGELWA-AMADHILA

PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

AT THE

SADC INDUSTRIALISATION WEEK

DAY 2, PARALLEL SESSION 3,

SAFARI COURT HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE – MAIN PLENARY

ROOM 3

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: TOWARDS A NEW TRADE

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

TUESDAY, 31 JULY 2018

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

- Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers present
- Captain of Industries
- Esteemed invited Guests
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to address the 3rd annual SADC industrialisation week being held under the theme; **“Promoting Infrastructure Development and Youth Empowerment for sustainable Development”**, with the aim to intensify engagement with the private sector in order to accelerate the implementation of the SADC Industrial Strategy and Roadmap.

I thank the SADC Secretariat for organising this event and I also acknowledge the other support partners for their important roles in hosting this event.

I am informed that several sessions have been organised to unpack issues related to industrialisation in the SADC region. At this session under **“Women’s Economic Empowerment: Towards A new Trade Policy and Governance”**, I am specifically asked to talk about the role of trade in development with a special focus on the contribution of women.

Open trade means a bigger market for our goods and services, facilitates the creation of regional value chains and creates a better trading and investment environment.

Trade, is thus an important tool for inclusive growth and for poverty eradication for women who are estimated to account for around 70 per cent of informal cross-border traders in the SADC region. However, we need to come up with policy that will ensure that majority of women graduate from informal trading to formal trading.

The key word here is *inclusive* - we must not allow the gains of trade to mean that some are left behind. Thus, we need trade to grow the economic pie to be equitably shared by all.

Trade creates opportunity, but it is up to us to direct that opportunity, and to enable our citizens to take advantage of these opportunities. In short, our policy choices will influence the distribution of the opportunities to trade, and benefits of trade.

At this juncture, let me talk about Namibia's Industrialisation Policy. The policy is anchored in Vision 2030, taking due cognisance of our ambitions to become a developed and industrialised nation by 2030. It also aims to ensure that macroeconomic stability is recognised as a necessary condition for sustained economic growth and development. It is further geared towards openness to ensure market access for domestically produced products and services and built on three interrelated pillars, namely market integration, infrastructure development, and industrial development, without which, no meaningful industrial development will be possible.

Director of proceedings,

Like in most countries, majorities of women are engaged in the SME sector, and we all know the robustness of the SME sector as a vehicle for job creation and economic growth.

The Namibian Government has thus come up with interventions aimed at assisting women business such as the Equipment Aid to assist SMEs to procure productive machinery and equipment. This is intended to help budding small entrepreneurs to improve and increase their productive capacities and product quality as well as to enhance business prospects, survival and growth in general.

Since its inception in the 2009/2010 financial year, close to 3000 individual businesses have been assisted to the value of N\$ **218, 504, 194.00** and majorities of them are women.

Further, the Development Bank of Namibia supports women-owned enterprises to increase and broaden developmental impact. During the course of this year-2018, of the N\$380 million projects financed, N\$120 million went to women owned projects in the areas of renewable energy, meat processing, accommodation establishment and tourism related business activities.

Director of proceedings,

There is a human rights imperative for gender equality, but there is also an economic imperative. When women work, they create value; when women earn more, they spend more. We simply can't afford for women to participate less in the economic life of this region than men.

When we talk about industrialisation in the 21st century, we must be aware that the global economy has changed. Economies are now based on services, and ICT penetrates every aspect of the economy and our lives. A potential risk that we must be alert to is the exploitation of the gender wage gap to gain a competitive edge in light manufacturing.

According to the latest Namibia Labour Force Survey, women's monthly wages (in Namibia Dollar) are on average 16% less than that of men. This pay gap is experienced in advanced countries as well. Globally, the average pay (in US Dollar) for women in 2017 was \$12,000, compared with \$21,000 for men. These figures are included in the World Economic Forum's wide-reaching Global Gender Gap Report 2017 which looks at the differences between men and women in four key areas; Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.

We are required to come up with interventions to eliminate barriers for women's participation in the economic sector. Our Government has developed a comprehensive legal framework to ensure equal opportunities for men and women, among others:

- The *Affirmative Action (Employment) Act*, 29 of 1998, that provides for affirmative action measures to achieve equal opportunity in employment for racially disadvantaged persons, women and persons with disabilities;

- The *Labour Act*, 11 of 2007, that, amongst others, protects employees against unfair labour practices and disallows an employment decision based on gender between employees who do work of equal value;
- The revised *National Gender Policy* (NGP) that is designed to create a society in which women and men enjoy equal rights and access to basic services and to provide opportunities for all to participate in and contribute to the political, social, economic and cultural development in the country;
- The *Public Procurement Act* that provides for priority attention to formerly disadvantaged groups including women.

We are pleased to note that at the government level, the public service shows a representation of over 50 percent for women although this reduces to 49 percent at managerial level. The ruling SWAPO Party has also put in place a policy of 50/50 Party gender representation in parliament which has seen women representation rise significantly both in parliament and in Cabinet.

Further, the African Union's agenda 2063 includes bold aspirations and targets for gender parity. It states:

Africa of 2063 will have full gender parity...the economic and political glass ceiling that restricted women's progress will have been shattered.

One of the 2063 goals is to 'achieve gender parity in public and private institutions, and the removal of all forms of gender discrimination in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres.'

The SADC Gender Protocol, to which Namibia subscribes, similarly includes aspirations and practical steps to achieving these goals. The vision of the SADC Gender Protocol is for:

“A region where women, men, girls and boys have equal opportunities to participate freely as equal partners in all spheres of public and private life, including in all decision-making processes, and have equal access to and control over productive resources and services, as well as contribute to and benefit from all development processes and initiatives.” Trade can contribute to this goal, or it can undermine this goal.

Gender equality in trade is being recognised at the global level – most recently and most significantly in the Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment. This declaration, spearheaded by Sierra Leone and Iceland and signed by 119 countries, including Namibia, and around half of the other SADC member states is a commitment to making trade and development policies more gender inclusive.

We are, thus, not short of commitments at a political level. But these commitments need to be translated into specific policy measures. However, it is not just policy that affects women’s participation. Social norms play an important role in shaping gender equality. It is time to think about the continuing usefulness of some of these norms. For example, norms that tell us:

- Women’s work is less valuable
- What it means to be a good wife and mother
- What it means to be a leader

- What is 'women's' work

Of course this won't change overnight. But women need to be heard. Women need to be seen.

Women who have succeeded – in *spite* of the institutional and social barriers – need to use it to share the gains by advocating for women and to represent well. If our young women do not look at the leaders of industry, at the political leaders, at entrepreneurs and see women, they might not imagine that they might have a place in those kinds of positions.

Director of proceedings,

We also need to address the education gap to ensure that our education systems are creating the foundations for the knowledge society in which we live.

Digital literacy, especially for young people is as important as numeracy or language literacy. It means encouraging entrepreneurs – through financing mechanisms, skills development, and improving the ease of doing business.

We need to acknowledge that trade can affect women differently than men. It has become increasingly clear that it is not sufficient for policy making to be blind to gender. To ensure that women are included, and for economies to make the most of the contribution of women, policies must take into account gender difference and the structural and institutional barriers to female participation.

We need to also consider women when it comes to work. In Southern Africa, like in most parts of the world, work tends to be segregated along gender lines both horizontally— women are more likely to work in certain sectors, and vertically—women tend to be concentrated in lower skill, lower paid or more precarious positions, and are less likely to share in ownership of a firm.

Women traders can be affected by trade changes in different ways. Those who are trading in imported goods may benefit as these goods become cheaper and more available, but those who are producing goods for sale and find themselves subject to import competition may be forced out of the market.

Given the concentration of women in agriculture, it is critical to consider how changes in the economy that can be brought about by trade changes will affect incomes in this sector. Women make up approximately two-thirds of the agricultural labour force and produce most of the food on the continent.

But although responsible for the bulk of food production, the African Development Bank notes that “women farmers have less access to essential inputs—land, credit, fertilisers, new technologies and extension services. As a result, their yields tend to be significantly lower than men’s.” This means that the impact of changing tariffs and shifting trading patterns needs to be very carefully monitored – reduced tariffs and improved trade facilitation might increase access to new markets for some women farmers, but increased competition may also have a more severe impact on lower yielding women farmers and push them out of business.

Turning to other sectors of the economy; we know that women are disproportionately represented in services sector, in terms of employment – globally and on the continent. This means that services sector development is positively associated with female employment. Since trading costs for services are much higher for services than goods, reducing trading costs for services is likely to positively affect women's trading possibilities.

Finally, we need to pay attention to cross border traders. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that informal cross-border trade contributes about 30-40 percent of total intra-regional trade in the SADC region. The FAO estimates that an average of 48% of the incomes from informal cross-border trade are spent on household needs: food, rent, education and healthcare services. This trading income is a crucial contributor to livelihoods and well-being.

In conclusion, ladies and Gentlemen, Gender is not everything. But women's empowerment is absolutely essential. Trade can enhance economic wellbeing and lift people from poverty. Yet, we know that the gains from trade are not evenly distributed. Women are a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to this uneven distribution.

So this is a call to action.

There is something each one of us can do. Collectively we can have significant impact:

- If you are woman in a position of power – reach out to a young woman and give her guidance. Amplify her voice.
- If you are a Trade Policy Maker – listen to women producers and traders, pay attention to the different effects trade policy has on women and men. Consider the impact of policy choices on women.
- If you are an Industrial Policy Maker – think beyond car manufacturing and direct your energy to the industries of the future.
- If you are a Statistician, help us all by providing gender disaggregated data.
- If you are an Educator, encourage and enable a girl-child in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths.
- If you are a man – think about how gender norms might be holding the women in your life back – your wife, your daughters, your colleagues, your mother. What can you do to shift this?

I thank you for your attention