

## **Key Messages: WOMEN'S MONTH 2010**

South Africa's commemoration of August as Women's month is marked by Women's Day (9 August) when in 1956 women from all races and walks of life marched to the Union Buildings in protest against oppressive laws. This year marks the 54th anniversary of the women's anti-pass march and serves to remind South Africans about women's rights.

Commemoration of National Women's Day takes place in the Eastern Cape, Buffalo City Municipality in Amatole at ABSA Stadium in East London under the theme: **"Working Together For Equal Opportunities and Progress for all Women. Forward to the Decade of African Women"**.

The year 2010 marks the commencement of the decade of African Women (2010-2020) as declared by the Heads of States of the African Union.

**Government recognizes that the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment are central to all efforts aimed at combating poverty and stimulating sustainable development.**

- The dedicated Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities gives emphasis to Government's initiatives to protect and promote the interests of women and other targeted groups.
- The 2009 female representation in Parliament as well as in Provincial Legislatures puts South Africa amongst the leading countries in the world in terms of the number of women in important leadership positions.
- Government continues to pursue the advancement of education, including the elimination of gender disparities to increase the participation of women and girls. Since 2000, there has been a steady increase in the number of graduating Science, Engineering and Technology female students.
- Good practices such as safety nets for abused women and children (Victim Empowerment Shelters and Thuthuzela care centres) to protect women and children were established.
- Income support structures and programmes like women in construction, South African Women in Mining and Energy, Women in farming are amongst others economic empowerment programmes in place to enhance women development.

**The advancement of women's emancipation calls for a reflection on the attainment of regional and global milestones which mature in 2010.**

- Commitments from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (30th years since adoption by the UN General Assembly) and the Beijing Platform of Action (15 years since adoption) are being fulfilled in the form of adopted gender-sensitive laws and constitutional provisions.
- The need to address gender inequality was emphasized as an explicit goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Millennium Development Goals thus providing another valuable opportunity for the advancement of CEDAW and the Beijing commitments.
- The launch of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020, provides an opportunity to leverage on global and regional political goodwill for the advancement of African women. The AU adopted the Africa Gender Policy in 2009 guides the

process of gender mainstreaming at the regional and sub-regional levels, and makes provisions on technical support the AU committee can provide to member states for mainstreaming gender in their policies and programmes.

- In accelerating our initiatives towards the realized emancipation of all women, there will be a conference report outlining the Plan of Action towards Beijing +20, report on discussions around Bills in Parliament, a National Plan of Action on Women in informal Cross Border Trade and a report on Women's Empowerment beyond the World Cup.