



**economic
development**

Economic Development Department
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT: MINISTER EBRAHIM PATEL'S ADDRESS TO THE WOMEN'S PARLIAMENT

30 AUGUST 2012

The Minister of Economic Development, Mr Ebrahim Patel, has called for the increased participation of women in the mainstream economy.

Speaking at the Women's Parliament in Cape Town today, Minister Patel said while the country's gender policies have been an area of clear success in the democratic era, South Africa still has a long way to go in the area of gender equality.

"The empowerment of women is an economic imperative. The productive sectors of our economy are the engines that drive economic development, and these are areas where women have been largely absent".

When women participate in greater numbers in the mainstream economy, economic development accelerates.

Statistics show that women, particularly African women, continue to lag behind in terms of the numbers employed, as well as the pay received, for those in employment. In 2012 almost 2 million fewer women than men had income-generating employment. In 2010 – the latest available data - an African woman with a degree still earned less than a white man with only matric. In addition, 46% of men work in the productive sectors plus transport and construction, compared to 20% of women. Women also make up only 4,2% of executive directors of listed companies.

The State can play a role in empowering women by expanding opportunities for employment overall and ensuring greater career mobility and equity for all workers. In that context it must work with all stakeholders to make sure that women benefit, including in terms of access to employment in growing industries, improving conditions in sectors with more women workers, and increasing access to the kinds of education and training normally dominated by men.

“The New Growth Path provides a framework which places jobs firmly at the centre of economic policy, and the National Infrastructure Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that women are fully incorporated into the mainstream economy, thus further transforming gender relations.”

“The Women’s Parliament can play a key role in ensuring that women, especially the poor and marginalised, benefit measurably from South Africa’s economic policies,” Patel concluded.

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FOR MEDIA QUERIES CONTACT:

Ayanda Shezi 079 880 2059