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**REPORT TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON THE 61ST SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**



**CONTENTS**

1. Executive Summary 3
2. Introduction 4
3. Purpose of the Report 4
4. CSW61 Planning Process 4
5. Summary of the Programme of the Work of the 61st Commission 6
6. Documentation 7
7. Opening Statements 7
8. Summary of Key messages from the opening statements by the High Profile CSW61 Delegates 7
9. National Statement by South Africa 9
10. Statements by Regional Organizations and Institutions 11
11. Ministerial Segments 11
12. Parallel Meetings and Side Events 12
	1. CSW61 Youth Forum 12
	2. Multilateral Meetings/Events 14
	3. Bilateral Meetings 15
	4. Parliamentarian Meetings 15
	5. Side Events 16
13. Agreed Conclusions 17
14. Multi-Year Programme 18
15. Sessions held by the Commission to Date 18
16. Themes for the 62nd and 63rd Sessions of the Commission 18
17. Conclusion 18
18. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Commission on the Status of Women met for the first time in 1947 at the Lake of Success in New York and since the Commission meets annually to track progress on the implementation of the set global standards to promote gender equality, protect the rights of women and accelerate the economic empowerment of women. Therefore, on behalf of the South African Government, the Department of Women has a mandatory responsibility to led, coordinate and facilitate South Africa’s participation to the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. Also the Department of Women has an obligation to develop a participation report outlining the engagement undertaken by the South African delegation at various Sessions of the Commission.

The Commission on the Status of Women is convened annually to follow-up the progress by Member States on the implementation of Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action which was adopted in 1995 as a visionary agenda for the empowerment of women.

The Government of South Africa represented by the Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Minister of the Department of Labour and the Deputy Minister of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs including the MECs of Social Development from Eastern Cape and Kwa Zulu Natal participated at the 61st Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women that took place from the 13th to 24th March 2016 at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York.

The Commission was convened under the priority theme “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”. In addition, the Commission under the review theme provided Member States a platform to assess the progress and challenges on the implementation of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls whilst it also considered an emerging theme on the “Empowerment of indigenous women” as global emerging issues that Member States should begin to give attention given the raising voices from the indigenous communities in various parts of the world on how they are marginalized and discriminated against.

The 61st Session of the Commission was preceded by the Youth Forum which took place on the 11th and 12th March 2017 that was convened under the theme “Youth creating gender equality: Economic empowerment in the changing world of work”. The CSW61 Youth Forum was attended by more than 650 participants to discuss the emerging challenges and opportunities for girls and young women in partnership with young men, persons of all gender and generations to achieve gender equality, justice, economic empowerment, and sustainable development of all persons, leaving no one behind.

South Africa delivered a National Statement that was enriched by the outcomes of the national consultation with civil society organizations, government departments, business community, organized labour unions and the chapter 9 institutions. Also to indicate that interventions by South Africa were made during the Ministerial Roundtable on “Informal and non-standard work: What policies can effectively support women’s economic empowerment?”. In addition, South Africa delivered a statement during the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination on Racial Discrimination that was held on the 21st March 2017 under the theme “Racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration”.

At the margins of the 61st Session of the Commission, South Africa hosted various sessions that were in line with the priority theme “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” and also co-sponsored an events on “Global Equal Pay Coalition: Launch of Platform of Equal Pay Champions” which concluded by the launch of “Equal Pay Platform of Champions” for ending global gender pay gaps. Commissioner Nomasonto Mazibuko (South Africa) of Commission on Gender Equality and the Executive Director of Albinism Society of South Africa was nominated as a member of the Platform of Champions.

To pursue engagements with diverse groups, South Africa also participated in the following key side events organized by the United Nations Women, United Nations Entities such as UNESCO, SADC, South African NGOs such as Illitha Labathu, Sonke Justice, The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) and the Heinrich Boll Stiftung Foundation for Southern Africa.

The South African delegation was comprised of the Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Minister Susan Shebang, Minister of Labour, Ms Mildred Oliphant and Deputy Minister of Traditional Affairs, Mr Obed Bapela, MEC of Social Development of Western Cape, Ms. Nancy Sihlwayi, MEC of Social Development of Kwa Zulu-Natal**,** Ms. Weziwe Thusi and Members of Parliament who were led by the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Ms Thandi Modise participated and contributed in Ministerial Roundtables, High Level Interactive Sessions as well as the side events. The delegation was also constituted of representatives Chapter 9 Institutions, Civil Society Organizations, Business Community and Development Partners including Senoir Officials from Government Departments.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60) was organized by a joint partnership between the United Nations Women and United Nations Economic and Social Council. The CSW60 took place under the priority theme “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” one priority theme, namely, the “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” and including review theme “challenges and achievement in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for Women and girls” contained in the Agreed Conclusions from 2014. In addition, the Commission also considered focus area on the “empowerment of indigenous women”.

The discussions on the priority theme were mainly informed by the changed in the world of world that is spurred by innovation, technology, globalization and increasing human mobility including climate change, humanitarian crises, rising informality of labour and economic inequality. The priority theme was adopted to emphasize that sustainable and healthy economies can be achieve when women are empowered and when the persisting inequalities that are preventing women to get an equal footing with men can be removed.

Central to the discussions was the notion of equal pay and women’s unpaid work to decent work including the removal of barriers of discrimination and investing in women’s access to digital and green economies. The unpacking of the key issues for women in the changing world of work was mainly on: (1) Equal pay for work of equal value (2) Redistribution of unpaid care work (3) Women in informal economy (4) Removal of the barriers (5) Women organizing and (6) Unlocking opportunities for women.

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to share with the Members the Portfolio Committee what transpired at the occasion of the 61st Session of the Commission that was held from the 13th to 24th March 2017 at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York.

On the 24th April 2017, the Department of Women convened a the CSW61 Report Consolidation meeting where all the delegated who attended and participated at the CSW61 Session were invited to provide their inputs to the draft country participation report. However, the Members of Parliament who were part of the delegation did not attend the meeting. The country participation report will be submitted to Cabinet for noting by end of May 2017 upon consolidation of all the inputs from the delegates and the report will be share with the Members of the Portfolio Committee.

1. **PLANING OR PREPARATORY PROCESS**

Prior the CSW the Department of Women writes to the Speaker of Parliament and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces to inform them about the upcoming CSW Session. The Speaker of Parliament and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces then provide the Department of Women with the names of Parliamentarians who will be part of the South African Delegation to CSW.

In addition, based on themes of the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Department of Women invited Civil Society Organizations, Business Community, Organize Labour and Chapter 9 Institutions. The delegates are invited to form part of the Government delegation. Preparatory and briefing meetings are convened by the Department of Women to engage the envisaged delegates on the themes of the Commission and to inform the delegates about the reports they will be expected to write upon return from the CSW session. In this regard two delegates ‘meeting were held, one in South African on the 9th March 2017 and one in New York on the 12th March 2017. The meetings were attended by the representatives from Civil Society Organizations, Business Community, Organize Labour and Chapter 9 Institutions including the representatives from Parliament. The purpose of the report by individual delegates is to share their experiences and observation on global trends and issues. However, to-date, individual reports have not been received from the Members of Parliament.

The preparatory work for the Sessions of the Commission takes place at national, regional and international platforms.

**At an International level**: as a Secretariat, leading to the Sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, the United Nations Women, informed by evidence base researched information and case studies, has a responsibility to recommend to Member States the fundamental issues the priority theme should addressed. Therefore, prior the CSW61 Session, in consultation with the Member States, the UN Women convened an Expert Group Meeting to analyse and assess the global trends pertaining to economic, social and political factors that positively or negatively affects the status and condition of women on the issues that the priority theme seeks to address. The Expert Group meeting was convened on the 26th-27th September 2016 at the ILO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. In addition, on behalf of Member States, the UN Women also convened the Multi-Stakeholder Forum on the 30th January 2017 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The meeting was attended by Ambassador Matjila.

**At regional level**: in preparations for the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) convene the African Ministerial Pre-Consultative Forum for a brainstorming session for the African Ministers to discuss and agreed on CSW approach and make recommendations. In this regard, during the African Union Pre-Gender Summit which took place from the 26th –27th January 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. UNECA convened CSW61 African Ministerial Pre-Consultative Meeting for the African Ministers to discuss, agree and consolidate Africa’s position particularly on the priority theme of the Commission. The meeting was attended by Minister Susan Shabangu. To ensure that at the CSW61 Session Africa speaks in one voice, CSW61 African Ministerial Pre-Consultative Meeting formulated and recommended the following key messages and strategies for the African Union Member States:

* African Member States to harness the demographic dividend by investing in young women and girls.
* African Member States to develop and implement gender-responsive macroeconomic policies that promote women’s economic empowerment and rights.
* African Member States to encourage to strengthen accountability mechanisms for women’s economic empowerment.
* African Member States to ensure women’s full, equal and effective participation and leadership at all levels of economic and social policy decision making, including in regards to peace, security and humanitarian action.
* African Member States to ensure informed decisions and safe mobility for women locally, nationally, regionally and internationally.
* African Member States to establish social protection policies, and provide adequate infrastructure and public services to advance women’s economic empowerment and rights.
* African Member States to ensure that women have access to and control over productive resources, services and markets.
* African Member States to eliminate discriminatory laws, regulations, practices and stereotypes that hinder the protection and progression of women in the world of work.

**At national level**: CSW61 Planning Meetings were convened between the Department of International Relations and Cooperation and the Department of Women on 23rd November 2016, 27th January 2017 and 9th February 2017. The Planning Meetings were convened to discuss issues pertaining to the determination and the side of the delegation, national preparations for CSW participation and engagements, role clarification between the DIRCO and DOW, accreditation of delegates at the United Nations, processes for South Africa to serve in the Commission and the Bureau and Coordination of the National Statement, coordination of the national statement, reflection on the proposed roundtable, side events, logistics and procedural requirements including South Africa’s candidature to the Commission and bureau.

However, prior the Consultative meeting, on the 9th December 2016, the Department facilitated a Consultative meeting for the Civil Society Organisation to present the themes of the 61st Session of the CSW including the Report of the meeting on the United Nations Experts Group on the priority theme. The Consultative meeting with CSO was also to establish their perspective and views of the themes within the South African context.

On the 17th February 2017, the Department of Women convened the Consultative meeting on the Commission on the Status of Women 61st Session under the theme “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”. The meeting was held at Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History in Pretoria, South Africa. This Consultative meeting preceded the CSW 61st Workshop with the Organised Labour, Business and Civil Society that was organised and facilitated by the Department of Labour in collaboration with the Department of Women at NEDLAC Level. The Workshop was held on the 20th February 2017 at Hilton Hotel in Sandton, South Africa

Present at the Consultative meetings were: senior officials from government, representatives from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), representatives from Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), representatives from Organised Labour representatives from UN Women, representative from ILO, representatives from the Business Community and representatives from Chapter Nine (9) institutions.

In particular the discussion of the Consultative meetings as organised by the Department of Women and the Department of Labour were purposed to address the following issues within the South African context and perspective: (1) gender pay gaps, decent work and gender based violence in the work place, (2) Gender-responsive macro-economic policies that promote women’s economic empowerment and rights, (3) Gender-responsive macro-economic programs that promote women’s economic empowerment and rights, (4) Investing in young women (Harnessing the demographic dividend by investing in young women (5) Discriminatory laws, Safety and mobility of women and Social protection and (6) Gender based violence in the workplace including workplace bullying

In addition the participants were encouraged to also deliberate on national macroeconomic environments for employment creation and access to decent work in view of: (1) Global gender gaps in work and employment; (2) Gendered pathways from unpaid to informal to formal decent work; (3) Care economy and paid and unpaid care and domestic work; (4) Violence at work; (5) Social protection floors and measures; and (6) Rights to form, join, and mobilize through trade unions.

1. **SUMMARY ON THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

As a norm, the work of CSW is carried out over two weeks. Annually the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women convenes sessions for two weeks where Member States fully and actively participates.

The representatives of Member States evaluate progress made on gender equality and women empowerment. Member States also identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and the advancement of women worldwide.

Each annual session focuses on the identified priority theme and the review theme for the year and selected emerging issues.

The starts its work by (1) **Electing the officers**: The Commission elects Chair, the Vice-Chairs, the Bureau if the two years term of office has lapsed, the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur, and Five Members Group on Communication if the two years term of office has lapsed and **Adopting the agenda**: The Commission the adoption of the provisional agenda. The 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women was presided by H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil) from the Latin American and Caribbean States Group and the Vice-Chairs were:

* Ms. Fatma Al Zahraa Hassan (Egypt) from African States Group, Vice-Chair
* Ms. Šejla Đurbuzović (Bosnia and Herzegovina) from the Eastern European States Group, Vice-Chair
* Mr. Jun Saito (Japan) from the Asia-Pacific States Group, Vice-Chair and
* Mr. Andreas Glossner (Germany) from the Western European and other States Group, Vice-Chair
1. **DOCUMENTATION**

To conduct its business the Commission considered a number of reports prepared by UN Women, including a report on the priority theme and a report on progress made on the review theme at national level. Statements submitted by NGOs also form part of the documentation for the session. The documents listed below are available at [www.csw.org](http://www.csw.org)

1. **OPENNING STATEMENTS**

Within the context and scope of the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on sharing experiences and good practices on the implementation of the Platform for Action with a view of overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges, the following high profile delegates delivered opening statements which can be obtained from [www.csw.org](http://www.csw.org)

* Chair of the Commission, H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota
* Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres
* President of the Economic and Social Council, H.E. Ambassador Frederick Musiiwa Makarume Shava
* President of the General Assembly, Mr. Peter Thomson
* United Nations Under-Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the UN Women, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
* Chair of the Convention of the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Ms. Dalia Leinarte
* Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Dubravka Simonovic

Given the priority theme, a representative from the International Labour Organization (ILO), Manuela Tomei. Also invited to deliver a joint statement three representatives of the Commission’s recently-concluded annual CSW Youth Forum: Hannah Woodward, youth delegate from Australia; Aminata Gambo, activist from Cameroon; and Mary-Kate Costello of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development’s Working Group on Youth and Gender Equality in the United States.

1. **SUMMARY OF KEY MESSAGES FROM THE OPENING STATEMENTS BY THE HIGH PROFILE CSW61 DELEGATES**

**ANTONIO DE AGUIAR PATRIOTA**, Chair of the Commission, welcomed the ministers, senior officials, experts and civil society representatives from around the world, saying their participation was an expression of a strong commitment to gender equality and women’s human rights, as well as the belief that “together we can and will accelerate progress for women and girls everywhere”. The Chair mentioned that the session, under the priority theme “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”, must provide clear guidance on eliminating work-related structural barriers within and across countries in which women faced discrimination, he emphasized. Also acknowledging that women are indeed paid less than men, carried an undue burden of unpaid domestic work and were concentrated in the informal economy, where they lacked protection and opportunities for advancement. The Commission should give clear guidance as to how Governments could ensure that women took full advantage of new opportunities.

**ANTÓNIO GUTERRES**, Secretary-General of the United Nations, mentioned that his most important message for the 61st session of the Commission is inspired by a gratitude to participants for raising their voices on behalf of women’s equality and dignity around the world. “Every day you are on the front lines for fairness and for a just and decent world,” serving as an inspiration as they championed equality, he said, stressing that women’s empowerment must be a priority in a male-dominated world. Empowerment was about breaking structural barriers, he added, pointing out that all were better off when doors were opened to women and girls in schools, military ranks and peace talks. Such efforts were vital in addressing historic injustices, he said, adding that Governments and other institutions achieved better results when gender equality reflected the people they served.

**FREDERICK MUSIIWA MAKAMURE SHAVA (Zimbabwe)**, President of the Economic and Social Council, said the Commission was an indispensable arm of the Council system, addressing issues of vital interest to the well-being and progress of half of humanity. “When it succeeds in the execution of its mandate, we all succeed,” he said, noting that the current session was taking place at a pivotal moment when commitments under the 2030 Agenda must be turned into action. Practical contributions emanating from the current session would enrich efforts to realize the full empowerment of women and contribute significantly to the 2030 Agenda, he said, adding that the Commission had set the bar high in 2016 by providing a comprehensive road map for gender-responsive implementation of the Agenda.

**PETER THOMSON (Fiji)**, President of the General Assembly, recalled that gender equality had been enshrined in the United Nations Charter at the Organization’s founding, but despite some great strides on that front, progress remained slow and uneven to the present day. Noting that all his own grandchildren were girls, he expressed faith that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would enable them to grow up enjoying the same rights as their male peers. In particular, Sustainable Development Goal 5 committed all stakeholders to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, he noted. “I see the day when all forms of violence against women and girls are eliminated, when women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities are ensured.”

**PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA**, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), described the Commission as a “barometer of progress” towards a world free of gender discrimination and inequality — “a world that leaves no one behind”. “Inclusive economies and a positive world of work are powerful ways to break repeating cycles of poverty,” she said. Citing both progress in some areas and the erosion of gains already made, she emphasized that much-needed positive developments were not happening fast enough, calling for “constructive impatience” to help in reaching targets. The current session was renewing focus on the needs of those furthest behind, including young women, refugees and migrants, women affected by gender-based violence, those denied sexual and reproductive health rights, and those facing multiple or intersecting forms of discrimination.

**DALIA LEINARTE**, Chair, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, described ongoing work, saying dialogue with States parties aimed at consistently raising women’s economic empowerment, including calls for them to eliminate sex-based discrimination, gender pay gaps and sexual harassment. It had also urged them to provide economic opportunities for women in rural areas, those with disabilities, refugees, migrants, victims of trafficking and those wishing to leave prostitution. Education was crucial for economic empowerment and women’s full participation in economic, social and political life. States must ensure safe school environments and diversify educational choices to promote women’s and girl’s access to scientific, technical and managerial professions.

**DUBRAVKA ŠIMONOVIC**, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, said the struggle must be grounded in a quest for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all areas. Since the beginning of her tenure in 2015, she said, official visits to Argentina, Australia, Georgia, Israel, State of Palestine and South Africa had resulted in a country report with specific recommendations on actions needed to address gaps in combating violence against women. Her next thematic report, on shelters and protection orders, which she planned to present at the Human Rights Council’s June session, would focus on States’ obligation to address violence against women through coordinated national legislation and prevention policies, including the provision of shelters, crisis centres, safe houses, help lines and civil and criminal protection. “We have gone a long way in defining violence against women as a human rights violation and form of discrimination,” she said. While the international community now had a solid understanding of required actions to combat those violations, States and international organizations were still not using all agendas and tools at their disposal to address the realities of women and girls living in conditions of normalized violence at home or in the workplace.

**MANUELA TOMEI**, Director of the Conditions of Work and Equality Department, International Labour Organization (ILO), said the Commission’s priority theme resonated with the ILO mandate. In many ways, the quest for women’s economic empowerment would be lost or won depending on how well they gained entry into the labour market. While the world of work was changing in profound ways, where those changes would lead in terms of supporting women’s economic empowerment was not preordained. To secure a better future for all, better policies must be put in place now. A striking feature of today’s landscape was the lack of progress made on global women’s economic empowerment and gender equality.

**Ms. WOODWARD**, speaking for the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, recalled that the Youth Forum had brought together more than 750 young leaders to discuss emerging challenges and opportunities to achieve equality, justice and the economic empowerment of all people. That dialogue had been anchored in the experiences of young people, especially young women, she said, noting that the Forum’s Outcome Document had recognized the reality that gender was not binary and that prioritizing marginalized voices meant going “beyond tokenism” to address discrimination against all young people. Stressing that men and boys must also be involved in those key actions, she went on to outline the various priorities identified by the Youth Forum, including: young women’s leadership; technical and financial support for the involvement of young women in policies that affected their lives; protection and support for human rights defenders; the creation of conditions that would allow young women to participate in policy development; and investments in youth-led campaigns.

**Ms. GAMBO**, speaking for Cameroon’s Mbororo Pastoralists Community, outlined a number of additional priorities, including the need to address the crisis of unemployment and under-employment that disproportionately affected women and young people; to build partnerships with the private sector and other actors to improve training, education and workforce development, thereby ensuring decent work for women; and to recognize the need for equal pay for equal work in order to close the unjust wage gap between women and men.

1. **NATIONAL STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA**

Through the National Statement South Africa gets an opportunity to share the goals attained, achievements made and efforts underway to close gaps and meet challenges towards the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The National Statement delivered by Minister Susan Shabangu is as follows:

Chairperson

South African delegation wishes to take this opportunity to congratulate our new UN Secretary General H.E. Antonio Guterres for reaffirming women leadership with the appointment of the third woman Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations. I am delighted to see the successful second sitting of the UN Youth Forum and its focus on issues relating to education and skills development, access to finance and economic opportunities, combating alcohol and substance abuse, dealing with issues of HIV/AIDS etc. It is through investments in our youth that we can assure ourselves of a better future. South Africa has a dedicated National Youth Development Agency which prioritizes youth issues.

Chairperson

South Africa assures you of our continued support to the work of the Commission and your chairship during your tenure. We align ourselves with the statements delivered by Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Nigeria on behalf of the Africa Group; and Swaziland on behalf of the SADC. South Africa has now achieved 42% of women in our Cabinet – and presiding officers of our legislature are women. We are in course to achieve 50% women representation before 2030. As government, we have made progress in advancing women and gender parity in the workplace in a relatively short period of time. We have amended our Employment Equity Act to achieve equity in the workplace. This would help close the wage gap and to ensure fair treatment of women in the Care Economy. We have also agreed on a minimum wage for domestic workers – and we also have preferential procurement policies in favour of women.

Consistent with our Gender Mainstreaming objectives, we remain committed to changing the very fabric of gender disparity in our economy e.g., in business, in construction and technical industries. We have increased Black women directorship of Johannesburg Stock Exchange Listed Companies. In 2006, there were 114 black women directors in JSE-listed companies – a number that increased to 385 by 2016. Since January this year, it is now mandatory for all listed entities to have a policy of promoting gender diversity at board level – as well as disclosure of how they are performing against this policy. In the Judiciary, our statistics currently show that of the 242 permanent judges, 86 are women – representing about 35% of the total. Early this month, President Zuma announced his nomination of a woman to become South Africa’s first female President of the Supreme Court of Appeal.

Chairperson

The Fourth Industrial Revolution – and its potential to narrow industry gender gaps is a frightening prospect. Automation will take away jobs – particularly from women and therefore sources of sustainable livelihoods for households. In the face of these challenges, we will not relent in our efforts to ensure access to justice – economic opportunities – employment – equal pay for work of equal value – paid maternity leave – equal rights and others. Women’s empowerment through education particularly in STEM Fields will ensure women’s full participation in the changing world of work. In this regard, two South African women professors are recipients of the Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Award.

The majority of students enrolled at our universities is women – and continue to perform better in the STEM fields. In 2016 – 56% of bursaries were offered to women towards postgraduate studies.

In the period 1996 to 2014, women’s overall enrolment in higher education increased from 48% to 58%. This is consistent with our National Development Plan.

Chairperson

South Africa has developed an HIV/AIDS prevention campaign for girls and women led by our Deputy President. This 3-year campaign focuses on HIV infections – unwanted pregnancies – school drop-outs – sexual and gender-based violence for girls and women aged 15-24 who have a high HIV/AIDS infection rate. We have integrated women as soldiers and military commanders in our peace-making, peacekeeping and peace-enforcement roles on the African continent. We have also taken special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. We reaffirm our full commitment to the advancement of women empowerment and gender equality. In this context, we wish to draw the world’s attention to the humanitarian situation of Palestinian women and girls in the occupied territories.

South African looks forward to collaboratively engaging with you Chairperson and other Member States to ensure a successful outcome of this Session.

I Thank You Chairperson

1. **STATEMENTS BY REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS**

Within the context and scope of the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on sharing experiences and good practices on the implementation of the Platform for Action with a view of overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges following Organizations and Institutions delivered the opening statements representing their regional blocs. The statements can be obtained from www.csw.org

1. Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China
2. Nigeria on behalf of the African Group
3. El Salvador on behalf of Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)
4. Belgium on behalf of GOF on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
5. Guyana on behalf of Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
6. Swaziland on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)
7. Slovenia on behalf of the Human Security Network
8. Viet Nam on behalf of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

In addition, statements which can also be obtained from [www.csw.org](http://www.csw.org) were also made by the Member States, the Observers, the United Nations Specialized Agencies, the International Governmental Organizations (IGO), and the representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations.

1. **MINISTERIAL SEGMENTS**

Following the official opening of the Commission the Minister gets an opportunity to interact through participation in various categories of Ministerial Segments, notably, the four (4) Parallel Ministerial Roundtable, the High-Level Ministerial Dialogues, the Voluntary Interactive Dialogues and the Interactive Expert Panel. The Ministerial Segment are purposed to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as their human rights. Through the ministerial round table the Ministers obtain an opportunity for high-level engagement on key issues arising under the priority themes of the Commission. In this regards, the South African Delegation participated as follows:

1. **The four (4) Ministerial Roundtables were convened as follows:**

**Roundtable A: “**Gender pay gaps in the public and private sectors: how can equal pay for work of equal value be achieved in the changing world of work?”. At this roundtable, South Africa participated as non-panelist. South Africa did not present a statement but engaged on discussions

**Roundtable B: “**Technology changing the world of work: how can technology and innovation be harnessed to accelerate women’s economic empowerment?” At this roundtable, South Africa participated as a non-panelist. South Africa did not present a statement but engaged on discussions.

**Roundtable C:** “Informal and non-standard work: what policies can effectively support women’s economic empowerment?” At this roundtable, South African was invited to make a presentation and to engage on discussions.

**Roundtable D:** “Full and productive employment and decent work for all: how can Sustainable Development Goal 8 be realized for women by 2030?” At this roundtable, South Africa participated as a non-panelist. South Africa did not present a statement but engaged on discussions.

1. **The High-Level Interactive Dialogues among the Ministers considered deliberations on the priority, review and emerging themes as follows:**

**High-level Interactive Dialogue amongst Ministers on priority theme:** “Building alliances to promote women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”. At this dialogue, South Africa participated as a non-panelist. South Africa did not present a statement but engaged on discussions.

**High-level Interactive Dialogue amongst Ministers: “**Accelerating implementation of the agreed conclusions commitment for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”. At this dialogue, South Africa participated as a non-panelist. South Africa did not present a statement but engaged on discussions.

**High-level Interactive Dialogue amongst Ministers on emerging theme: “**Empowerment of the indigenous women”. South Africa participated as a non-panelist. South Africa did not present a statement but engaged on discussions. However, the matter was not concluded and will be taken forward to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) Sixteenth Session scheduled to take place from the 24th April to 5th May 2017 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The 16th Session of the UNPFII is convened under the theme Special Theme: “Tenth Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: measures taken to implement the Declaration”. The Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs will attend and participate at the 16th Session of the UNPFII.

**High-level Interactive Dialogue amongst Ministers on review theme:** “Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for Women and Girls” South Africa participated as a non-panelist. South Africa did not present a statement but engaged on discussions.

1. **The Minister also had an opportunity to receive presentation from the experts as follows:**

**Interactive Expert Dialogue on priority theme:** “The global care economy in the context of the changing world of work”. South Africa participated as a non-panelist. South Africa did not present a statement but engaged on discussions.

**Interactive Expert Dialogue:** “Enhancing availability and use of data and gender statistics to support accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. South Africa participated as a non-panelist. South Africa did not present a statement but engaged on discussions.

1. **PARALLEL MEETINGS AND SIDE EVENTS**

South Africa use the National Statement and the participation in various meeting and side events as mechanisms to profile the work that is undertaken at national level to redress gender inequalities, as well as to combat the discrimination and oppression of women and girls. This include sharing of government initiated programme and project to accelerate the social and economic empowerment of women and girls.

* 1. **CSW61 YOUTH FORUM**

The CSW Youth Forum was launched by UN Women in March 2016 and it met for the first time on the 11th–12th March 2016 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to bring together young people to amplify their voice and views on gender equality and the empowerment of young women and girls as well as to advocate and share their perspective on the implementation of Agenda 2030. The Youth Forum is established to give young people an opportunity to speak with one voice whilst placing diverse sights and outlook on challenges and opportunities for advancing gender equality and sustainable development from local to national, regional and global context. The Forum is a global platform where young women and girls can safely present and discuss their challenges and concerns manifesting at local, national, regional and global context. Therefore, the meetings of CSW Youth Forum will be scheduled annually prior the Sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Under the theme “Youth creating gender equality: Economic empowerment in the changing world of work”, the UN Women hosted the Second Session on the CSW Youth Forum on the 11th – 12th March 2017 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The CSW61 Youth Forum opened with performances by young artists and an interactive dialogue with UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, followed by a panel featuring Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed; Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, Lakshmi Puri; General Secretary of World YWCA, Malayah Harper; young feminist entrepreneur and disability rights advocate, Casar Jacobson from Canada; and artist and feminist youth activist from Tanzania, William Otuck.

The Forum was attended by about 1000 and they produced an outcome document in the form of Youth Declaration which anchors the voices and experiences of young people advocating for governments to invest in youth as this pays high dividends and translate into higher productivity. Copy of the Youth Declaration can be obtained from [www.csw.org](http://www.csw.org)

The Youth Forum programme constituted of four Plenaries on:

* **Investing in Young Women’s Leadership**: The first plenary focused on the young women’s leadership as a key enabler for ensuring that the changing world of work works for all women. Panellists of the planary stressed that young women’s leadership starts with education, from the home to school, to decision-making positions; and investing in girls’ education and leadership from an early age is key. The panellists further discussed issues concerning self-esteem and body confidence, and removing barriers, such as sexual harassment and gender discrimination.
* **Young Women as an Economic Force**: The second plenary presented the conclusions of the study conducted by the International Labour Organization in 10 countries that young men were more likely than young women to obtain stable employment and find formal work. The plenary also receive a presentation of the World Youth Report of 2016 which showed that globally, youth entrepreneurship is still most common among older male youth, with self-employment being least likely among younger women. The plenary tackled the issue of young women’s economic empowerment, and debated on the key factors that can accelerate progress and barriers that must be removed. The panellists of the plenary noted that even where more girls and young women are receiving education, it is not leading to better or decent work for youth, particularly young women. Female entrepreneurs need to have easier access to markets, finances and benefit from science and technology. The private sector can play a significant role by creating enabling policies, such as paid parental leave.
* **Young Men in Gender Equality to Transform Patriarchies:** The third plenary focus on engaging men and boys to advocate for gender equality. UN Women’s Elizabeth Nyamayaro, who started the HeforShe movement, delivered the opening remarks, sharing her own experience of inequality and why it is critical for all of society to work on ending gender inequality. The plenary featured male youth activists from around the world who shared how they became feminists and stressed that for them, feminism is about transforming masculinity. They encouraged men to take the space in the society they already have and transform them into feminist spaces.
* **Strengthening Intergenerational Partnerships**: The fourth plenary discussed why intergenerational partnerships are critical to achieve gender equality and sustainable development. The participants pointed out a need of feminist movement for gender equality with all actors and changing the systems of power even within the feminist movement so that partners across generations can come together and advance the common agenda of gender equality. The plenary also discussed the roots of challenges facing intergenerational partnerships such as assumptions and stereotypes that different generations have about each other. The plenary indicated that these challenges must be examined and that spaces must be intentionally created for girls’ participation. The Youth Forum embraced cross-sectoral, intergenerational and multicultural approach to achieve gender equality

The Youth Forum also convened a thought provoking session called **Mirror Mirrow** to deliberate on the following questions:

* How can Governments work towards assisting young women with low esteem?
* What has affected positive and negative elements of young women’s confidence?
* What policies and programmes could be effective in better supporting body confidence?
* How can Member States invest in Girls education in order to invest in their body confidence?
* How can Member States increase the number of girls in STEM Fields?

The CSW61 Youth Forum observed the commemoration of the International Youth Day on the 12th March 2017 under the theme “The road to 2030: Eradicating Poverty and Achieving Sustainable Consumption and Production”. The discussions focused on the leadership of youth in ending poverty and achieving sustainable development. Youth Forum closed with the launch of CEDAW for Youth, a publication by UN Women that explains why CEDAW (the women’s human rights treaty) is important to youth and describes its impact in advancing gender equality and human rights for women and girls around the world, including young women and girls. The publication can be obtained from [www.csw.org](http://www.csw.org)

* 1. **MULTILATERAL MEETINGS/EVENTS**

At the margins of CSW61, South Africa participated in the following multilateral meetings.

1. Informal Commonwealth meeting on the 13th March 2017
2. SADC Side Event on 17th March 2017
3. Consultation Meeting of the African Union Ministers on 20th March 2017
4. 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the 21st March 2017

**Commonwealth informal meeting**: On the 13th March 2017, the Commonwealth convene an informal breakfast meeting under the theme “Peace in the home-ending domestic violence together”.

The participants were informed that the Commonwealth Gender Sections will convene policy dialogue at the margins of the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women. In addition, the participants were informed that in 2018 the United Kingdom will host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), of which the Commonwealth Women’s Forum (CWF) is an integral part starting on 16 April, 2018.

Information on the plans for CHOGM and the CWF will be communicated with the Commonwealth National Women’s Machinery before end of 2017.

**SADC Side Event**: South Africa also participated at the SADC side event convened under the theme ‘implementing the CSW Resolution 60/2 and the political declaration on ending AIDS”. The meeting focused on Women, the girl child and HIV to address the underlying structural gender inequalities in the changing world of work, through the five-point strategy that aims to:

* Promote equal economic opportunities and decent work for women and girls
* Ensure full engagement of men and boys
* Promote access to, retention in and completion of education by girls
* Scale up scientifically accurate age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education
* Enact and intensify implementation of laws, policies and strategies to eliminate gender- based violence.

In line with the CSW60/2 resolution, South Africa has developed a three-year HIV/AIDS prevention campaign called “She Conquers” which is led by the Deputy President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa. The campaign has been initiated to combat HIV infections, unwanted pregnancies, school drop-outs, sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated against girls and women.

South Africa emphasised that it will ensure the full implementation of the resolution by SADC Member States when it takes over the chair of SADC from August 2017 to August 2018.

**Consultation Meeting of the African Union Ministers**: The meeting emphasised that African must united to take forward the women’s agenda and the countries must continue to enhance harmonisation that would create a platform to share experiences and lessons learned and to take forward a common agenda. The Ministers also acknowledged the commitment and efforts by Africa to take great strides to redress the imbalances between women and men in the full enjoyment of their rights.

**71st Session of the UN General Assembly**: As South Africa annually commemorate Human Rights Day on the historically linked with 21 March 1960, in remembrance of the Sharpeville event that left 69 people dead and 180 wounded when police fired on a peaceful crowd that had gathered in protest against the Pass laws, the United Nations General Assembly also observe the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on March 21st as a call to the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination following the events in South Africa in 1960 where police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville 57 years ago. The theme for the 2017 commemoration of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was “racial profiling and incitement to hatred in the context of migration”. The theme was based on the fact that the world faces the largest humanitarian and refugee crisis since the end of World War Two.

The UN General Assembly President, Peter Thomson lauded South Africa’s global role in the fight against racism and intolerance for almost 57 years. The President also indicated that the rise in migration, often due to economic hardships, conflicts, climate change or otherwise has placed the world at a crossroads. As a rise in racism and intolerance often in the form of Xenophobia becomes a growing challenge of our time. The President further stipulated that “People of conscience should stand up for pluralism and cross -cultural understanding whenever the opportunity allows. Across the globe it is incumbent on political leaders to role model tolerant and respectful attitudes towards migrants. We need to promote cross-cultural education in our schools to foster respect for diversity and understanding of the positive contribution refugees and migrants make to our societies and economies.”

South Africa represented by Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Ms Susan Shabangu also delivered a statement under the theme “Racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration”.

* 1. **BILATERAL MEETINGS**

Bilateral meetings by the Leader of Delegation (Minister Susan Shabangu) are conducted with countries, industry leaders and senior members of UN Entities on the margins of the CSW. It is important to note that what goes on outside of the official meetings of the CSW is often just as important for a Minister and Member State, as what happens inside. The main purposes of bilateral meetings include the following:

1. Building relationships between two countries or entities;
2. Deepening political dialogue; boosting all-round cooperation and increasing communication and coordination in international and regional affairs
3. Strengthening strategic dialogue and boosting pragmatic cooperation between two countries or entities
4. Strengthening and consolidating the three pillars of political, economic and people-to-people mechanisms and opening up to broader prospects for future ties, exchanges, and forging strategic partnerships.
	1. **PARLIAMENTERIAN MEETINGS**

On the sidelines of the 61st Session of the Commission, the Member of Parliament attended the Parliamentary Meeting that was Organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in partnership with the UN Women organised a Parliamentary Meeting under the theme “Empowering parliaments to empower women: Making the economy work for women”.

In addition to the Members of Parliament also attended the following Parliamentary Meeting organised under various themes:

* Sexism, harassment and violence against women MPs
* Rising Extremism, Macro-Economic Policies, and the Relevance of Gendered Analysis
* Equality in politics: another 50 years to reach 50-50?
* Gender Equality in Nationality Laws
* Violence against women in politics and in parliament

The Parliamentarian delegates have been requested to provide their individual report to the Department of Women to share their experiences and observations of the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

* 1. **SIDE EVENTS**

Side-events are fundamental activities of CSW processes because they serve as a platform for information sharing and provide an opportunity for governments, civil society organisations and UN women to:

1. Share best practices
2. Share experiences and lessons learned
3. Transfer knowledge and know-how
4. Influence perspectives

South African delegations attended and participated in a number of parallel side events hosted by other State Parties, International Civil Society and International Organisations provide an opportunity for South Africa to track global trends, and gain insight on emerging issues. Furthermore, South Africa gets an opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding on what other countries are doing to tackle gender issues particularly on issues concerning gender transformation and women empowerment as well as to gain understanding of the gender responsive strategies and mechanisms of other national governments.

The side events hosted by South Africa, its domestic stakeholders and international partners provided a platform for participants to robustly deliberate and debate on progressive, conflicting and challenging issues on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. In this regard, the side events facilitated discussions on prominent measure South Africa should strengthen to create a conducive for women to facilitate progress toward achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The side events also registered progress on how the South African Constitution and legislations such as the Employment Equity Act have laid a foundation for the country to advance and protect the rights of women to participate in the labour market.

In the nutshell, South African side event succeeded in highlighting that the workplace is changing and structural barriers to gender equality and gender-based discrimination persist. The sides events succeeded to point out that gender-based discrimination manifest itself when women are systematically paid less that man for work of equal value.

In line with the priority theme, South Africa was officially invited to participate in the following side events hosted Civil Society, the UN Member States, International Organization:

**UNESCO:** Women’s empowerment in the Engineering World and the launch of the Million Girls in STEM Campaign. The Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Ms. Susan Shabangu was invited to participate as a panellist.

**UN Women, ILO and Governments of Iceland and Switzerland:** Global Equal Pay Coalition and the Launch of Platform of Equal Pay Champions which will address Gender Pay Gaps. The Minister of Labour in South Africa, Ms. Mildred Oliphant was invited to participate as a panellist.

**CSVR, CGE, Tshwaranang**: Outsiders on the inside-Challenging the myth of boys networks and other barriers to women’s leadership in contemporary work environment. The Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Ms. Susan Shabangu was invited to participate as a panellist.

**SADC**: Implementing the CSW Resolution 60/2 and the Political Declaration on Ending AIDS. The Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Ms. Susan Shabangu was invited to do closing remarks.

**CSVR**: From transitional to transformative Justice: Women’s Economic rights matters. The Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Ms. Susan Shabangu was invited to participate as a panellist.

**International Women’s Forum**: Making a difference-innovation and women in power. Members of Parliament were invited to participate on the discussions.

**Ilitha Labantu and the African Women Independent Forum**: Join the conversation on innovative approaches to challenge the patriarchal economic spheres. The Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Ms. Susan Shabangu was invited to participate as a panellist.

1. **AGREED CONCLUSIONS**

The principal outcome of the Commission on the Status of Women is the agreed conclusions on priority themes set for each year. Agreed conclusions contain an analysis of the priority theme and a set of concrete recommendations for governments, intergovernmental bodies and other institutions, civil society actors and other relevant stakeholders, to be implemented at the international, national, regional and local level. In addition to the agreed conclusions, the Commission also adopts a number of resolutions on a range of issues. The negotiations create a platform for Member States to advance their national interests and views with the purpose to influence the global agenda on gender equality and the empowerment of women as well as to protect the language adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development held from the 5th to 13th September 1994 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which was adopted by the 4th World Conference held on 4th to 15th September 1995.

The CSW61 Agreed Conclusions placed emphasis of the fact that the economic empowerment of women in the changing world of work can be accelerated and achieved through the strengthening on normative and legal frameworks, strengthening of education, training and skills development, implementing economic and social policies for women’s economic empowerment, addressing the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers, managing technological and digital change for women’s economic empowerment, strengthening women’s collective voice, leadership and decision-making and strengthening private sector role in women’s economic empowerment. In particular, the negotiation process are to influence global change on social and economic development and through the negotiation process South Africa’s expressed its aspirations on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Department of Women in partnership with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation participated in the Agreed Conclusions, as well as in the African Group (AG) meetings where they provided inputs to the common African position. The Africa Group negotiations were led by Swaziland and Comoros who were nominated during the preparatory processes. In line with the Country’s foreign policy, South African insisted on the inclusion of issues such as sexual harassment, women rights for labour associations, access to broadband by women and girls, addressing the SDGs as a whole than singling them out are well as living and minimum wage which considered to be of interest to South Africa. Some of the language from the CSW61 Addis document “One Africa One Voice” held from 26-27 January 2017 was incorporated in the Agreed Conclusions as new language. South Africa’s national views were robustly debated within the Africa Group and the broader CSW61 United Nations Member States Negotiations Group. In this regard, South Africa proposed the following issues to form part of the Africa Group Position:

1. The Right to Development;
2. Health: transforming unpaid and informal care roles of women in the health sector into decent work;
3. Education;
4. Access Economic and Productive Resources;
5. Elimination of Violence against women in the workplace
6. Fully engaging men and boys;
7. Role and contribution of rural women and girls;
8. Rural women to the agricultural sector
9. Official Development Assistance
10. Access to broadband
11. Feminization of Poverty
12. Climate Change
13. Migration and development
14. Aquaculture
15. Expand trade opportunities for women

The negotiations outcomes are expected to promote and strengthen efforts to advance interests in the changing world of innovation and technology as well as to protect the rights of women and girls to access education and training particularly in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The rights of the indigenous women will also find expression in the negotiated agreed conclusions. The outcomes of the negotiations also seeks to ensure that national governments develop and implement policies to combat violence against women, sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the workplace whilst government also promote outreach programmes to raise awareness, advocacy and campaigns against gender stereotypes concerning unpaid care and domestic work.

The full copy of the Agreed Conclusions of the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women can be obtained from [www.csw.org](http://www.csw.org)

1. **MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME**

In 1987 the Economic and Social Council elaborated and adopted a long-term programme called the Multi-Year Programme of Work to guide the work of the Commission and to empower Member States to prepare for the Commission in advance. As a result at the 60th Session, the Commission approved by consensus a Multi-year Programme of Work. The approved programme of work highlights the priority and review themes for the upcoming 61st, 62nd and 63rd Sessions of Commission.

The Multi-Year Programme of Work assist the Commission on the Status of Women to be more focused and to have a thematic approach in taking up a cluster of the critical areas of concern from the Beijing Platform for Action at each of its sessions.

Also, the Multi-Year Programme of Work provide a framework to assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Platform for Action and is in line with the coordinated follow-up to post Women’s Conferences.

1. **SESSIONS HELD BY THE COMMISSION TO DATE**

The various sessions convened by the Commission since its inception can be obtained from [www.csw.org](http://www.csw.org)

However, the Department of Women in partnership with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation has a responsibility to convene review workshops to assess and evaluate national implementation of the Agreed Conclusions.

1. **THEMES FOR THE 62ND AND 63RD SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION**

The themes of the sixty-second and sixty-third sessions have been adopted as follows:

 **Sixty-second session (2018):**

1. Priority theme: challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls;
2. Review theme: participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (agreed conclusions of the forty-seventh session);

**Sixty-third session (2019):**

1. Priority theme: social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
2. Review theme: women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development (agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session);
3. **CONCLUSION**

The Department of Women will develop a project plan for the CSW session that will be shared with the Portfolio Committee.