

**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**1088. Mr M Hlengwa (IFP) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation:**

(1) Given that South Africa is Chair of the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, from 14-25 March 2022 (details furnished), what (a) policies and/or programmes does her department currently have in place to (i) promote gender equality and (ii) mitigate climate change and (b) benefits does her department hope to reap from the specified engagement;

(2) what are the (a) relevant details of her department’s top priorities for the time spent in New York and (b) tangible outcomes that can be expected?

**REPLY**

1. **What (a) policies and/or programmes does her department currently have in place to (i) promote gender equality** **(ii)** **mitigate climate change and**

**(a) (i)** The Department approved a framework on gender equality and women’s empowerment in November 2017. The Policy is premised on the promotion and protection of human dignity and human rights of women. It takes cognizance of the role of the National Gender Machinery in promoting non-sexism particularly in relation to organisational transformation and change as well as their impact and management thereof. The policy goes ‘beyond just numbers’ and incorporates comprehensive intervention mechanisms aimed at mainstreaming gender into all departmental structures, policies, processes, and programmes. In line with the National Policy Framework on Women’s Empowerment and Gender (2000), the policy proposes a shift away from treating gender issues as ‘business as usual’, towards locating it at the epicenter of transformation and development within the Department.

**(ii)** The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meets annually to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify emerging challenges, set global standards for women’s rights and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and the advancement of women worldwide. The CSW66 theme of 2022, which was to engage on gender equality and empowerment of women in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction, is aligned to existing departmental policies.

**(b) Benefits the department hopes to reap from the specified engagement**

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the economic status of women and exposed women and girls to violence. South Africa’s election to serve in the CSW has come at the opportune moment when government seriously reviewed the status of women in the country. President Ramaphosa prioritised women financial and economic inclusion, leadership in political and social sphere, including addressing the challenges of gender based violence.

DIRCO also participated in the CSW66 to advance South Africa’s positions and national interest. The Department participated in order to ensure that the international norms to be developed are consistent with South Africa’s national policies, laws, and priorities. This year was therefore important to develop global policies and strategies that will consider the inclusion and empowerment of women when responding to climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies.

1. **(a) What are the relevant details of her department’s top priorities for the time spent in New York?**

South Africa argued that the social construct and marginalisation of women confines women economic activities to the periphery, especially in rural areas, where they are often the ones fetching water, gathering woods, fishing or farming land that is affected by floods and droughts. Meanwhile, their voices are often ignored in environmental planning and management. Therefore, women must be at the forefront to contribute to the climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as disaster risk reduction.

Issues that were highlighted during the Session should include:

* Burden of climate change and environmental disasters in developing countries is experienced by women and girls.
* Discussions should focus on sustainable development solutions that can improve the lives of women and girls.
* Gender bias of the impact of global warming is a reality and therefore women should be involved in solutions aligned with the decisions made at the UNFCCC.
* Access to land and productive resources for women is critical.

**(b) What are the tangible outcomes that can be expected?**

The Chairship of South Africa at CSW66 was successful. The discussions on the priority theme were timely as environmental changes, natural disasters and climate change have become the biggest threat that affect the most vulnerable, in particular women and girls.The outcome documents adopted were progressive and reaffirmed the women’s empowerment agenda in the context of climate change and disaster risk reduction. Member States highlighted that the CSW is not a climate change forum but one that focuses on women empowerment and gender equality. As a result, Member States managed to refocus the negotiations in line with women human rights agenda which aims to attain equality, empowerment of women and fight gender-based violence.