

**African National Congress  
Women's League (ANCWL)**

**12th National Conference**

# **POLITICAL REPORT**

**Radical socio-economic  
transformation for women**





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## **Radical socio-economic transformation for women**

**Delivered by:**

**President of the ANC Women's League**

**Comrade Angie Motshekga**

Chairperson, Secretary-General of the ANC Women's League, Cde Nokuzola Sisisi Tolashe

President of the ANC, Cde Jacob Zuma

Deputy President of the ANC, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa

Fellow Members of the NEC of the ANC Women's League

Fellow Members of the NEC of the ANC

Members of various Provincial Executive Councils of the ANC Women's League

Delegates and Leaders from all our Regional, Zonal and Branch Structures

Comrades and Friends representing the Tripartite Alliance, and Fraternal Organisations

Comrades and Friends



## Introduction

It is a great pleasure to welcome all delegates to this 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the African National Congress Women's League. We welcome in our midst 3 000 delegates, 2 750 of whom, are voting delegates, with a minimum of 90% of them being drawn from our Branches; and elected at properly constituted Branch General Meetings (BGMs), in accordance to Rule 14.4.1 of the Constitution of the ANC Women's League, 2008.

At the outset Comrades and Friends, I must express my sincere gratitude to all delegates and various leaders of the ANC Women's League who have made this National Conference possible. Today's National Conference is indeed a testament that the ANC Women's League is alive and well. The 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference is more than just a forum for the election of new leadership for the ANC Women's League, but a process of injecting new life to the organisation. Equally important, is the fact that this Conference offers us a moment for reflection, commitment and renewal. We can only survive as an organisation if we constantly review both our leadership collective and policy positions to be aligned to the material conditions of the time.

Chairperson, Comrades and Friends,

I must also be candid with all of you, as Comrades and activists. We are converging today 15 months later than we should have convened this conference. The National Conference was due in 2013. Leading any organisation leadership beyond its official term of office is burdensome to say the least. There were many challenges that have confronted the ANC Women's League. However, through our sweat and toil, and the steadfastness of our Comrades to re-constitute the dysfunctional Branches, Regions and Provinces of the ANC Women's League into stable and vibrant entities of the ANC Women's League, we persevered. Hence Comrades from all the Provinces, Regions and Branches of the ANC Women's League are here with us, having their memberships being accredited, in conformance with our Constitution.

We take this opportunity on behalf of the leadership collective to thank you comrades for your tenacity during these arduous challenges, details of which will be provided in this Report. We can assure you that everything possible was done to expedite the process. I am glad we did not throw away the baby with the bath water. We stayed the course, because we correctly believed that we were on the right side of history. Equally important, we are indebted to the ANC National Executive Committee for the constant and selfless guidance and support during these challenging times.

## Historic Anniversaries

Chairperson, Comrades and Friends, the 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the ANC Women's League takes place as our beautiful country celebrates its 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the 1994 Democratic Breakthrough. We are indeed celebrating peace, non-racialism, non-sexism, democracy and prosperity. This Conference takes place during the month of August when we commemorate and honour the pioneers who braved the icy steps of the Union Buildings on 09 August 1956 to take on the might of the apartheid regime. We do, indeed, owe the stalwarts of 1956 an immeasurable debt of gratitude for their bravery. South Africa would not be where it is today if it was not for the courage of these stalwarts and true servants of the people.

This year also mark the 61<sup>st</sup> year of the Women's Charter. The Charter recorded unambiguously the aspirations of women; in part it called for:

*“Equal rights with women in relation to property, marriage and children, and for the removal of all laws and customs that deny women such equal rights”.*

And, it has also been ninety-seven years since one of our own – an industrious and a visionary woman named Charlotte Maxeke launched the first formal women’s organisation, the Bantu Women’s League.

In this epic year, we also celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of adoption of the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter is characterised by its opening demand; *The People Shall Govern!* Unequivocally, it stated:

*“Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws”.*

Indeed, our world-renowned Constitution of the democratic, non-racist, non-sexist Republic of South Africa is predicated on the text of the Freedom Charter. Consequently, we can proudly say that there is no legislative and/or institutionalised exclusion of women in South Africa.

Indeed, we have a lot to celebrate. This includes the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the release of the late President, Tata Nelson Mandela, affectionately known as Madiba, from 27 years of incarceration by the apartheid regime. Chairperson, Comrades and Friends, as we celebrate Women’s Month during this month of August, it is very important to continue to learn from the lessons from the actions of our predecessors. These were the generations of leaders who took up the struggle from the early 1900’s, through the 1950’s and 1960’s on how they co-ordinated their campaigns; how their campaigns were pointed, relevant to the needs of the people, minimalistic, but with high impact. At the same time we must recognise that yes, we are our own generation, and challenges of our times should spur us in the direction that we should take in order to deal with the challenges of our times.

## Strengthening and renewal of the ANC Women’s League

This 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the ANC Women’s League must:

- Revive internal democracy, cohesion, discipline, participation, membership control and the culture of debate in the organisation;
- In terms of Rule 2 of the Constitution of the ANC Women’s League –
  - ❖ mobilise, organise and unite South African Women to participate in the struggle for the liberation of all oppressed groups;
  - ❖ spearhead the objectives, policies and programmes of the ANC Women’s League and the ANC, amongst women in particular, and society in general; as well as the emancipation of women within the ANC and its structures, and at all levels of government and South African Society as a whole;
  - ❖ promote the all-round development of women, and help in building their confidence, and to interpret their needs nationally; develop a national consciousness, patriotism, and a sense of accountability among and through women, and young women in particular; and women’s participation in every sector of public life, and to strive for women’s participation in every office in the ANC;
  - ❖ combat discrimination in public and in private life and institutions, and to work actively towards the dismantling of the patriarchal system, the elimination of laws, customs, practices and structures which militate against equality, and to oppose any strengthening of patriarchy;
  - ❖ campaign for the adoption and implementation of affirmative action programmes to combat the past legacy of gender and racial discrimination; and an end to all forms of violence against women, children and other vulnerable groups;

- ❖ co-operate with democratic organisations for the promotion of peace and development locally, regionally, nationally and internationally; and
  - ❖ campaign for the fostering of a culture and recognition of women’s rights as basic human rights.
- Defeat public perceptions of an organisation at war with itself, caring about none but itself, whose leadership, barring a few saints, are socially distant, and have lost the moral high ground; the culture of cynicism about politics, the withdrawal from political participation and channeling of participation and the protest into other forms of expression.

As the current generation, we must ensure that the ANC Women’s League continues to enjoy the long-staying power of its members, while at the same time must have the power, the nectar, and the fragrance to attract young, middle-aged and older women to its fold. The ANC Women’s League must renew itself to be considerate to the needs of young, middle-aged, elderly, disabled, working, unemployed, business and professional women. We must rekindle the ability of our forebears to organise and campaign around common issues.

Going to the 2016 Local Government Elections, the ANC Women’s League must reposition itself for coherent and pulsating campaigns, that will not only win the ANC these elections, but will position the ANC Women’s League as the home of all women in South Africa, cemented together by a common goal to liberate and emancipate women from all walks of life, both young and old, from the yoke of patriarchy. Chairperson, Comrades, and Friends, the continued strengthening and renewal of the ANC Women’s League, must be what should drive and energise all of us to accomplish at this National Conference. Comrade delegates and women leaders, I am sure you will agree with me that women’s emancipation requires a multi-pronged strategy that will address their political, social and economic needs. This multi-pronged strategy should address the shortages of women on corporate boards, in corporate senior management, in science, academia, technology, commerce in general, and in other sectors of society. The strategy should give guidance on socio-political and economic issues, not limited to women and poverty, unemployment, lack of land ownership, capital and means of production, as well as health challenges and threats, especially for rural women. The scourge of gender –based violence and the threats to the well-being of women, particularly women in rural areas, must be addressed as a matter of urgency. We will no longer tolerate the abuse of women in whatever form.

We all have to work together to emancipate and empower woman of the now and the future – women who are socially, politically and economically independent; women who are free from domination and exploitation; women who have opportunities equal to those enjoyed by men; women living in an environment where they are free and able to develop and exercise their physical, emotional and mental powers and faculties according to their requirements; women who choose their occupation in such fields as corresponding with their wishes, inclinations and talents, and enjoy working conditions equal to those of men.

Chairperson, Comrades and Friends, we say all this, very mindful of the fact that patriarchy, unlike racism and other such social challenges, is subtle and difficult to fight against, because it is embedded in the socialisation of society.

## Revolutionary Task of the ANC Women's League Today

Chairperson, Comrades and Friends, the immediate task of the ANC Women's League is to confront the challenge of Patriarchy. The problem of patriarchy is that it masquerades itself as an ideological construct of a system encompassing ideological, beliefs, values and practices underpinning the organisation and structures of society, resulting in unequal power relations between women and men. This also results in the subordination and subjugation of women in all spheres of life, beginning with the family and continued to be reinforced by social practices, and various institutions including education, work, religion, culture, and arts.

These pseudo ideological masks of patriarchy are presented as God-given, or as part of tradition and culture, hence there is always an expectation that women must just follow. In reality, Comrades we all know that patriarchy is nothing but a socially constructed misunderstanding of what it means to be a man and woman. It is a socially imposed division between sexes. Patriarchy extends its sphere of influence to physical and psychological attributes of women as though these were impediments to performing tasks that are done by men.

It is our revolutionary task within the ANC and society to be midwives of women's empowerment and advocates for radical transformation of gender relations with a sole objective to achieve real and meaningful gender equality. We must continue to be critical voices and a conscience of the African National Congress by unapologetically raising awareness about the negative effects of the vestiges of patriarchy within the movement and broader society at large. We must sustain this revolutionary task and carry it forward until every woman and girl child can achieve their optimal freedom of gender equality in our lifetime. We must preach in and every corner across the length and breadth of our country that gender equality is a fundamental human right which is an essential pre-requisite for achieving a gender equitable society.

As we were preparing for this conference, President Comrade Jacob Zuma, asked me a pertinent question during one of our conversations. He asked me what the ANC, and particularly the ANC Women's League, should do differently to address the emancipation of women and further develop the political and social power women have within and outside the ANC. I hope that this Conference will help give a reply to this question.

On the lips of many, is whether this ANC Women's League is unafraid to discuss and call for the future President of both the ANC and the Republic of South Africa to be a woman. I have always said, and I shall repeat it again today, that we have been ready to lead at any level of society since time immemorial and women have always been capable to lead. Our forebears prepared us for the eventuality of leadership. We must remember that the Women's Charter preceded the now famous Freedom Charter. History is littered with examples of the impeccable abilities of women to organise, mobilise, and lead.

This Conference should, amongst others, also help us deal with some of the debates we started and left unresolved. We had started a discussion advocating for the recognition of sex work through the approach which will embrace the dignity of women. Though under the current legal framework there are laws used to deal with the perpetrators of human trafficking, in practice women fall through the cracks which criminalises prostitution. Many of our members in the ANC Women's League indicated that they were not ready to deal with the subject. I remember one of our veterans from Limpopo pleading that we should allow them to pass away from this world, and before we declare prostitution as work. Comrade Chairperson, we also had resolutions around what has become an albatross around the necks of thousands of women and girl children, i.e., gender-based violence. Comrades, the December 2014 Birchwood National Policy Conference of the ANC Women's League resolved as follows, and I want to read word for word on the section referring to traditional practices:



*“Harmful practices that negatively affect the fundamental rights of women and girls are expressly prohibited in South Africa. In this regard, the Equality Act, Section 8(d) stipulates that unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender includes “any practice, including traditional, customary or religious practice which impairs the dignity of women and undermines equality between women and men, including the undermining of the dignity and well-being of the girl child”.*

This includes practices such as “ukuthwala”, virginity testing of girls younger than 16 years of age, and with conditions for girls over 16, the killing of “witches”, and the practice of female genital mutilation. The approach that is adopted is an overarching advocacy strategy, awareness raising, rights education and awareness of legal measures that can be taken.”

It therefore came as a surprise that when the issue of virginity testing arose in the media in relation to our Policy Resolutions; it was presented as a Angie Motshekga crusade against certain cultures. I, as the President of the ANC Women’s League, merely communicated on behalf of the ANC Women’s League to the media the resolution of the National Policy Conference of the ANC Women’s League, and not my personal fabrication. I appeal to all Comrades that we should be honest and fair in our dealing with the media. As the current serving President of the ANC Women’s League, I have a responsibility to represent what you adopted at the appropriate structures of the movement. So, I want to be clear, that delegates in the commissions and plenary adopted that resolution; and it said:

*“On virginity testing of young girls, this custom must be abolished, as it exposes the girl child to rape, incest, abuse and sexual violence.”*

I agree that Comrades may indeed have different and personal views on the matter, but we must be honest Comrades, and agree that the resolution was one taken collectively, and that was the resolution communicated by myself, as the President of the ANC Women’s League. It was an ANC Women’s League National Policy Conference resolution recorded and communicated as such. It is the responsibility of this highest decision-making body of the ANC Women’s League that must deliberate further on this question, and find a mutually agreeable resolution on it. As we always say: *“Amandla akuni njengamasebe”*.

As we had resolved, virginity testing is an intrusion into young girls’ privacy. These are minors who, by law, cannot make decisions about matters relating to sex and therefore problematic, because decisions about virginity testing are not their decisions. But as I say Comrades, as Branches, you hold the power to discuss and resolve on these matters.

In the Secretary-General’s Organisational Report, we list a number of laws passed by this government to empower women. In our Policy Discussion Framework, which we submitted to the ANC Conference in 2012, we acknowledged that, despite these laws, we still need *de facto* equality, real equality, because what we have now is legal, *de jure* equality .

There is no doubt that as South African women, a lot has been achieved. You look at women’s demands in the Women’s Charter of 1954, through the struggles of our forebears and under the ANC-led government, major strides have been made. Our voices are audible and our issues are on the table. According to the UN Women Report, only 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians worldwide were female as of January 2015, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995. As of January 2015, 10 women served as Head of State, and 14 served as Head of Government. Rwanda had the highest number of women parliamentarians worldwide. Women of Rwanda constitute 63.8 per cent of seats in the Lower House.

We are second in the world in terms of women participation in the mainstream politics. It was with this kind of statistical reality and driven by a long-term vision of wholesome women total emancipation in mind that the ANC Women’s League National Policy Conference focussed on key strategic focus areas that will serve as a springboard to accelerate the real meaningful emancipation. These are inter alia:

- Organisational renewal;
- Radical Transformation – Women and the Economy;
- Radical Transformation – Women and Health;
- Radical Transformation – Gender-Based Violence (GBV); and
- Radical Transformation – Women and Education.
- Women and the world

We later held a round-table to look at women and the National Development Plan, international country reports, and the Traditional Leaders Bill.

It is not funny how true it is that *Amandla asemasebeni*, because Branches are not only key during processes, so that they can articulate policy directions for the Organisation and decide on the Organisation's leadership, but are the lifeblood of the ANC. A vibrant, revolutionary and functional Branch, is very important. It is the Branch of the ANC Women's League on whose shoulders lays the historic mission to serve the people of South Africa with honour and dignity. The founding fathers of the ANC in 1912 stated that this glorious movement is established to serve the people of South Africa by uniting the African brothers and sisters, and to spearhead their struggle for fundamental political, social and economic change. As we know today, the site of struggle to achieve this is located at the basic unit of this movement – the Branches. It is at the Branch level where vigorous debates and campaigns to defeat patriarchy once and for all must begin. Hence during our term, we strove to ensure that there were always viable Branches in all our Provinces. In the Secretary-General's Organisational Report, we will indicate that, during this term of office:

branches have increased from 1 704 in 2008 to 2 415 in 2015 – representing a steady increase of 711 Branches (which is equivalent to 41.7% growth). Commensurate with the growth of our Branches, is membership, which grew from 130 642 in 2008 to 174 016 in 2015 – representing an increase of 43 374 members (which is equivalent to 33.2% growth). A further analysis of the growth trends as well as risks militating against growth of both membership and Branches must be done.

## Leadership Cadre and the Relationships with the ANC

Traditionally Comrades, the ANC Women's League draws our broad principles from those that we jointly develop with the ANC. The Polokwane and Mangaung ANC National Conferences re-affirmed the ANC as a strategic centre of power to provide leadership to the State and society as a whole.

The commitment to a non-sexist society has always been part of ANC policy and, as a result, it has been in the forefront of women's struggles, The ANC put forward a vision for a non-sexist society and institutionalised gender equality and women's empowerment through its policies, institutionalised arrangements and interventions. It is a fact that we are first members of the ANC, before we are members of the ANC Women's League.

It is therefore, important always to manage and to maintain a healthy relationship with the ANC, as the mother body. It cannot be the ANC we, as women are currently subjected to, where male leaders have the audacity to instruct us on who to choose, as recently happened in some Regions and Provinces. That was nothing, but abuse of office and relationships, and should be condemned in the strongest terms. Patriarchy does not only create unequal relationships, but it is also abusive and selfish to relationships. Being told at an organisational or official government platform by an ANC Chair, who to choose for the ANC Women's League leadership, amounts to abuse of office of the highest order, and should be rejected in no uncertain terms.

The ANC Women's League, whilst being an integral part of the ANC, remains autonomous and free to choose its leaders, and to develop its programmes. Yes, we can be lobbied, and advised, but surely we cannot be told who to elect as our leadership. I always use the tree analogy to illustrate the importance and inter-connectedness of the various motive forces in our National Democratic Revolution. Undermining any functioning of the parts of the tree, is actually harmful in the long run to the entire tree itself. For us, the struggle to destroy patriarchy, requires us to be more assertive and brave for our space and rights, and say no to abusive tendencies, not only outside, but also in the ANC itself. Our leaders in the ANC should treat us with absolute respect, because we deserve and expect nothing less.

As the national leadership of the ANC Women's League, we can attest to absolute respect from our leadership. We can confidently say President Zuma always treats us with respect, and it is important for women in some of the Provinces to demand the same. People should not threaten us or even use us as pawns. This is unacceptable. If we cannot stand up in our Organisation, how do we hope to stand up for anyone anywhere else! Charity begins at home. Our leaders in Provinces should respect our right to choose our own leaders, and to determine our programmes. *Amandla!* Let us not be fooled. It is not about us, or for our interest, but definitely and undoubtedly about those male leaders and their own interests, *Amandla!*

Chairperson, Comrades and Friends, the 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the ANC Women's League must revisit the absolute need to reassert the Movement's revolutionary morality and values, including the values of service to the people, human solidarity, humility and selflessness. The Movement must entrench the centrality of discipline, respect, commitment among its leaders and members. A leadership cadre that espouses these ideals, will be the leadership that can rebuild the ANC Women's League for the future.

To illustrate the importance of the supremacy of the Organisation above that of any individual, allow me Comrade Chairperson to invoke the words of one distinguished gender activist and stalwart of our anti-apartheid struggle, uMama Charlotte Maxeke, who once cautioned as follows:

*"This work is not for yourselves – kill that spirit of self, and do not live above your people, but live with them. If you can rise, bring someone with you".*

On the other hand, we are also members of the communities that we come from. Our task is to mobilise the cross-section of the women population to identify with, and become members of the ANC Women's League. We must organise the young and old; the poor, the middle class, and the rich, to join us in our struggle, in order to realise women's total emancipation. We must consider who comes into the Women's League, and define clearly the role of its strata within the Movement. For instance, young women professionals must be attracted to the Movement through campaigns that appeal to their context and position in society.

For us as the Women's League, this means that our singular focus should be on the condition of women. We must be visible in commerce, community structures, churches and other religious formations, media, intelligentsia, academia, non-governmental organisations, and more importantly, in all structures of the ANC. We must be there when women cry. We must be there when they celebrate. We must be with them when they fight their own local struggles; and equally be there when time for triumph arrives. The ANC is one giant Baobab Tree. Its success lies in having strong roots, branches, leaves, as well as a constant supply of water and essential nutrients. In this regard, the ANC Women's League must provide the necessary oxygen supply for the ANC to survive.

At the heart of the ANC Women's League's future growth and success, lies unity of purpose. We have always placed a premium on unity. Chairperson, Comrades and Friends, unity allows us to focus on the tasks at hand as a collective. We must remember the work that we do is not for our self-aggrandisement. We have on our shoulders, the historic task to defeat misogyny, male chauvinism, and patriarchy.

Over and above this, we are mothers. There is a Somali proverb which says:

*“Where there are no women, there is no home (no woman means no shelter; therefore, as they are the main pillars of the society then without them there is no means of joyous life).”*

In our own Movement, we also sing and say *lelizwe ngelamakhosikazi*. Both the song and the Somali proverb are spot on. I can assure you today that our struggle to achieve gender equality has multiple benefits.

Empowered women and girls, make healthier choices for themselves and their families and this result in society developing. The United Nations Population Fund says, *if you educate more women and girls you will automatically reduce poverty and improve the general health of communities* (UNFPA, 2010).

## National Policy Conference Resolutions

Chairperson, Comrades and Friends, allow me to refocus this Conference on the resolutions taken at our successful 2014 National Policy Conference. I think it is important for this Conference to take a closer look at these Resolutions, with a view that this august body – our National Conference of the ANC Women’s League – should further discuss them, refine those resolutions and adopt them as policies of the ANC Women’s League.

## Constitutional Amendments

The first resolution I want to flag, is around Constitutional amendments. The deliberations at the 2014 ANC Women’s League National Policy Conference, in the main, focused on a wide range of areas that are critical in building the resilience of the ANC Women’s League, and the enhancement of its capacity to continue with its strategic role of providing leadership to the people of South Africa, as well as ensuring the total transformation of our society. The themes guiding deliberations on *organisational renewal* included *organisational management, building a campaigning ANC Women’s League; gender mainstreaming, leadership to the society, broadening the base of the ANC Women’s League, capacity-building and cadre development, as well as governance*.

Clearly, the urgent need to amend the Constitution of the African National Congress Women’s League could not be left behind. Responding to the inputs emanating from deliberation of organisational renewal, it became imperative to reaffirm the African National Congress Women’s League as an autonomous organisation; while at the same time, recognising the supremacy of the African National Congress. The proposed Constitutional amendments, as will be fully explained later in the main, pronounce that, in the event that *the Constitution of the ANC Women’s League is silent on specific issues, but such issues are pronounced in the Constitution of the ANC, then the pronouncements as found in the Constitution of the ANC will be applicable to the ANC Women’s League to the extent necessary*.

## Crime

On crime, we proposed that crime statistics should be published regularly as opposed to once a year, that ANC Women’s League must monitor and evaluate the police and courts’ turn-around times related to gender-based violence. We must advocate for equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities. We further highlighted and condemned the killing of women, especially elderly women, because of being accused of practicing witchcraft. We called upon the Criminal Justice system to be sensitive to the gendered nature of these crimes against the elderly. We further raised concerns about the treatment of women and children including people living with disabilities.

## Health

On health we proposed that we must promote good health as a tool for radical socio-economic transformation. We spoke about continuing to improve access and improving our healthcare system, including continuing mobilising the ANC Women's League structures to mobilise our communities to support government's initiatives. We committed ourselves to championing campaigns and programmes aimed at the eradication of recreational substance abuse. In this regard, we must partner with government and other civil society organisations. We also pronounced ourselves on broadening health education and awareness.

## Land

On access to land the National Policy Conference resolved on the reviewing of all land legislations, with the purpose of giving women access to productive land, and strengthening the concept of home gardens. We also took resolutions on job creation and access to employment and livelihoods.

## Education

We noted progress in the area of education, including challenges, but then resolved further work to be done to improve access especially in higher education and training opportunities. We agreed that the ANC Women's League should ensure that we undertake structured programmes to roll-out campaigns emphasising on skills development for women and girls. We spoke about parental involvement in education, access to ICTs in education especially in rural schools, support for girl-learners taking Mathematics and Science, ensuring that young girls are safe in schools, and that we support and strengthen the culture of learning and teaching.

Chairperson, Comrades and Friends, as a Minister of Basic Education, I have a special appeal to this Conference to focus on the future of the girl child. I am of the view that the future of the girl-child in the 21<sup>st</sup> century rests on our shoulders. I want to posit that we can accelerate the struggle for gender equality, if we pay more attention on the education of the women and girl-children. In our communities, we must ensure that every girl-child has an equal opportunity to attain requisite levels of education, without any impediments.

My appeal to this National Conference, is take seriously all recommendations of the 2014 National Policy Conference, so that these should be adopted as official policies of the ANC Women's League. Once adopted as official policies, we must heightened lobbying and advocacy to ensure implementation and mainstreaming.

We have already succeeded in persuading the ANC-led government that, in order to institutionalise gender equality across all State institutions, there must be a gender mainstreaming approach. This is evident in the establishment of gender machinery across government, including a Chapter Nine institution, namely the Commission for Gender Equality.

## Conclusion

Chairperson, Comrades and Friends, in conclusion, I cannot stress enough the importance of Branches. Our Branches should be centres of activity. Our Regions must support and monitor programmes of Branches. Our Regions should be at the centre of our work as structures closest to Branches. Provinces must equally support Regions through both policies and provincially- and nationally-led campaigns. We need to look closely at how we activate these structures. Let a Branch adopt at least one programme of action for maximal implementation. We must have a Regional programme of action that must be implemented and monitored on an ongoing basis. Similarly the Provinces must have an overarching provincial programme of action. We will escape the blame game, if we all do our work. We won't have individuals asking what national has done for them, before they can account what they have done in their communities to take forward what had been agreed at different platforms – from Branch resolutions up to national resolutions.

My humble appeal is that, let us go back to our people and mobilise for gender equality, and avoid losing ground in our communities. We need to claim back even the lost ground.

Addressing the Mangaung 53<sup>rd</sup> ANC Conference, Comrade President Jacob Zuma said:

*“The future of our revolution and of our country is in our hands, and we must carry forward the work needed for the social and economic emancipation of our people”.*

Starting today, we need to prepare ourselves for this journey, towards socio-economic freedom for all our people, especially women and girls. We must spare neither strength nor courage in pursuing this historic imperative of the full emancipation of women.

I now declare the 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the ANC Women's League open!

Amandla!

Matla!

Malibongwe!



