

# friday's the think section

**Empowering miners for a better future**



JIC MINING SERVICES  
WESTDOWN INVESTMENTS  
PTY LTD

www.jic.co.za



**WOMEN MAKING STRIDES IN SA**

Faith Muthambi »P18



**OBAMA AND OUR YOUTH**

Rhulani Thembi Siweya »P19



**ENDING FREE HOUSING**

Frank Meintjies »P19



**YOUTH ACHIEVING DREAMS**

Yershen Pillay »P20



## United global action needed

Empowering women and gender equality are still far in the future, indicating that no inward-looking national programme will succeed



**Analysis**  
MAITE NKOANA-MASHABANE

AS WE celebrate two decades of freedom, we are provided with an opportunity to conduct an honest assessment of the journey we have travelled so far and what it has meant for South African women.

According to the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), globally, 139 constitutions, South Africa's included, contain guarantees on gender equality, with 125 countries outlawing domestic violence and 117 outlawing sexual harassment in the workplace.

Twenty years ago, 11% of the world's parliamentarians were women. Today, the figure stands at nearly 22%. Twenty years ago, 40% of women were engaged in wage and salaried employment.

Today, 48% of women are, although women still continue to perform the vast majority of low-paid and unpaid care work.

According to UN Women, 20 years ago, less than 75% of girls in the world were enrolled in primary school. Today, 90% of girls are.

Twice as many women died in pregnancy and childbirth, 20 years ago. However, 800 women still die every day and most of these

deaths could be prevented.

On the international front, South Africa ratified the landmark UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Cedaw) and participated in the historic UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995.

The UN Conference, attended by 189 member states, adopted the Beijing Platform for Action. This global agenda for women's empowerment offered a defining policy framework and roadmap for achieving gender equality and women's rights in areas such as health, education, decision-making and legal reforms with the ultimate goal of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women in both public and private life.

With 2015 marking the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Platform for Action, we still have a long way to go in fully realising women's empowerment and gender equality as set out in the Beijing agenda.

Currently, South Africa and other governments around the world, including international and regional bodies such as the UN and the African Union (AU), are undertaking a review on progress made on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Cedaw.

The international community is at present intensifying its efforts to attain the eight

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and considering a post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals as a global roadmap for the future. The implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is key in the achievement of the MDGs by 2015 and the post-2015 development agenda.

These processes provide an opportunity to position gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment at the centre of the global agenda.

Gender equality and women's rights must be reaffirmed as essential ends in themselves and means for achieving sustainable development, peace and security and human rights.

In this regard, South Africa and the AU have consistently called for a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the mainstreaming of gender in all other future goals in the post-2015 Development Agenda.

The AU's Agenda 2063 has also placed gender equality and the emancipation of women at the centre of the continent's integration agenda. Gender mainstreaming and gender parity are now accepted norms and standards that guide the continent's socio-economic and political policies at country level and in the AU.

This commitment is also the bedrock of our National Development Plan Vision 2030, which states that: "By 2030, we seek to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. We seek a

**Key points**

- » As we celebrate two decades of freedom, we are provided with an opportunity to conduct an honest assessment of the journey we have travelled so far and what it has meant for South African women
- » On the international front, South Africa ratified the landmark UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Cedaw) and participated in the historic UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995
- » The UN Conference, attended by 189 member states, adopted the Beijing Platform for Action
- » This global agenda for women's empowerment offered a defining policy framework and roadmap for achieving gender equality
- » With 2015 marking the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Platform for Action, we still have a long way to go

country wherein all citizens have the capabilities to grasp the ever-broadening opportunities available."

While the world has made significant strides in advancing the political and social aspirations of women, discrimination, violence and atrocities continue to be committed

against women and girls. According to UN Women, one in three women in the world lives with physical and sexual violence.

We cannot rest until we ensure that women and girls are protected from all forms of discrimination and violence so that they can fulfil their potential.

Notwithstanding these challenges, there has been some progress in the last twenty years since the Beijing Women's Conference, albeit too slow or too little.

The uneven nature of progress is a clear indication that no inward-looking programmes at a national level can succeed. Only a united global action is required today.

A gender perspective must be reflected in all policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. Women and men must work together in partnership towards the common goal of gender equality worldwide. Only by such a fundamental restructuring of society and its institutions, could women be fully empowered to take their rightful place as equal partners with men in all aspects of life.

This change represents a strong reaffirmation that women's rights are human rights and that gender equality is an issue of universal concern, benefiting all.

Maite Nkoana-Mashabane is Minister of International Relations and Cooperation