



ZIKALALA DELIVERS KEYNOTE ADDRESS AIMED AT UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT



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In a decisive move to empower women in construction, Public Works and Infrastructure Deputy Minister Sihle Zikalala delivered a keynote address at the South African Women in Construction and Built Environment (SAWIC and BE) summit, held at Olive Convention Centre in Durban.

The conference, held under the theme "*Leaving no woman behind – inclusive growth for all women*", is aimed at building the capacity of women contractors and entrepreneurs through training and mentorship. Furthermore, the summit sought to drive access to infrastructure opportunities and enterprise development for women in the Built Environment.

This women-led organisation was set up by the late Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Stella Sigcau, 28 years ago. It has worked hand in glove with the Department ever since, with a strong commitment to sustainable partnerships. The SAWIC & BE summit attracted women in construction, property development, property management and other areas of the Built Environment Professions.

During his keynote address, Deputy minister applauded the organisation, social partners and stakeholders for being a critical voice in the empowerment of women. "Thank you for implementing programmes to advance gender equality, and generational equality. Women must not be left behind or ostracised to the periphery of economic activity," said the DM.

Generally, construction is a male-dominated industry. The President of the SAWIC, Thembeke Mnisi, said the summit is about inclusivity. "A way forward for women to be empowered is to create space for women in construction by exchanging ideas, share experience and support one another," she said. As the country closes off Women's Month, Deputy Minister Zikalala assured women in the construction sector that the department remains a reliable partner in their development, even after the month of August. The department aims to always provide women with access to infrastructure opportunities and training.

