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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

**GUEST NAME: COMMISSIONER THOKO MPUMLWANA – DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON :
COMMISSION FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
DR. MALKA	Hello, I'm Dr. Amaleya Goneos-Malka, welcome to 'Womanity – Women in Unity'. The show that celebrates prominent and ordinary African Women's milestone achievements in their struggles for liberation, self-emancipation, human rights, democracy, racism, socio-economic class division and gender based violence.
DR. MALKA	Today's discussion is on Gender Equality and with us in studio is Commissioner Thoko Mpumulwana who is the Commissioner and Deputy Chairperson of the Commission for Gender Equality, her work focuses on the challenges of gender justice; she has served on the Electoral Commission of South Africa and the Council of the University of Pretoria and sits on several boards such as the Foundation For Human Rights, South African Women In Dialogue, Gender Links, Independent Development Trust and The Women's Development Foundation and I had the great pleasure to sit with her on a panel for the SABC televised broadcast of Women's Day in 2013.
DR. MALKA	Welcome to the show Commissioner!
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	Thank you very much I'm pleased to be here Dr. Malka.
DR. MALKA	The Commission for Gender Equality is a constitutional entity, it's created to encourage considerable improvement in the quality and life experiences of the disadvantaged genders in society, please can you tell us a bit more about the organisation and elaborate on its mission statement and what its purpose is?
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	We are pleased in South Africa to have and we are privileged to have a constitution that protects human rights and dignities and freedoms of people and I think the journey starts from where we were pre '94, a society that was oppressive and so when...as South Africans we had our freedom in 1994, as President Mandela said "never, never again" and that's also in the first part of our constitution and the preamble and therefore we are established as a Chapter Nine Institution. In the Chapter Nine of our constitution there are several institutions whose purpose is to support constitutional democracy and the Commission for Gender Equality is one of those in the same league as the Human Rights Commission, The Auditor General, The Public Protector, The Commission For Religion and Language and so on. So we were established in particular in terms of 187 to ensure that we promote respect for gender equality and the protection of the development and attainment of gender equality in South Africa, and then in terms of our legislation which is the Gender Commission Act, we have been established to ensure that we promote, we monitor, we protect, we support, we advocate for gender equality in South Africa. In addition to that there is a law called PEPUDA; it is a law that entails ensuring that there is equality, that people's equalities are protected in South Africa and so we have been given the latitude as the Commission For Gender Equality to ensure that in terms of PEPUDA, people can come to us if they feel that their equality in terms of gender; sexism for instance is being practiced on them and then they are able to take matters to court and our job is to monitor the functioning of the justice system and to ensure that citizens of South Africa enjoy their rights, especially in terms of non-sexism and gender

	equality.
DR. MALKA	And Commissioner how do you get the implementation running when people come through to you with their various issues and concerns such as sexism?
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	The first thing that is important to note is that as the Gender Equality our major role is to promote and protect. The actual implementation is the function of all citizens and institutions of South Africa, private, public including government and so it is really when people are unable to exercise their rights and when they feel violated and they feel that the structures that have been created by government are not working in their favour and then we encourage people to come and report to us when there are bottlenecks in the exercise of their human rights and dignities in terms of gender equality and so what we do every year in terms of the law we put a programme in place, a programme that will say what shall we focus on in this particular year in terms of our programme? And so we will look at issues like employment equity, we will look at issues like gender and religion, we'll look at gender and tradition, we'll look at gender and health and education, etc., and so we do that and we go to specific institutions and with a view to just monitoring, to see to what extent they are genuine about infusing and mainstreaming gender in their work.
DR. MALKA	And with the current setup for 2013 in terms of the objectives for the Commission this year, what would you say that those include, you'd mentioned briefly about gender equality, looking at equity, looking at the relationship with tradition, with religion, if you could just elaborate on some of the work that you've undertaken in 2013?
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	I also want to include something that I left out earlier on that is the monitoring of the state compliance to international instruments like The Beijing Platform of Action, CEDO, because as a country we sign up to international instruments that where state parties in the whole world sign up to say we shall treat people and we shall ensure that the rights of women and children, all sections of populations, are protected in a particular way and so we monitor whether the state party drives it's report, we also monitor if they implement decisions that are taken in terms of those instruments. For 2013 so every year we write our reports and one of those we sent to the United Nations in the Commission on the Status of Women which meets annually where we also go there to listen to the reports of the world but also where people come together to look at where we are in terms of gender mainstreaming and the position of women in the world, and so that's part of our role. We also report to parliament, we write regular reports on the functioning of various departments and we submit that to parliament. We monitor violence against women and how if the state, for instance, the state has said they will ensure that there is no violence and is reduced in the country and so the state machinery should be in place, the justice system, the correctional services, prosecutions, the courts, they have to work in synergy to make sure that victims are treated with respect and perpetrators are dealt with and that the system flows in perfectly. So we write reports, we have produced a report on 365 days; by 365 days we are trying to say that violence occurs virtually every minute and every second and therefore it is important for citizens to be alert to the fact that it is not a 15 days event, it is a matter they should be alert about every day, 365 days and that the state machinery should be operating at utmost efficiency to ensure that people are protected. We also had employment equity hearings, we had employment equity hearings for 2013, we did that and with a view to saying to what extent women are now reaching the highest level and whether policies exist in the public and

	the private sphere to make sure that women are protected in law and they exercise their gifts and creativity at the workplace.
DR. MALKA	So there's considerable integration and collaboration that is taking place between not only just the Commission for Gender Equality but through the relationships and ensuring that the machinery of government and its various departments, as well as the private sector, are operating to ensure that the protection of women and their rights is in place, and also that they are monitoring the effectiveness of whatever tasks or objectives have been set in place to ensure that they are achieved.
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	Absolutely. You will always find that the private sector lags behind and I think they lag behind because even though they have embraced the constitution, but the private sector is private, so there is a tendency not to follow what the constitution really says and we are worried about that and we are going to enhance our efforts to reach out to the private sector to assist them.
DR. MALKA	And what type of interventions do you think that we need in the private sector to ensure that we have the same adherence as we do on a government and on a public level that those same ideals come through on the private sector?
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	What has worked for us at the CGE is to have these hearings where we call them and we listen to what policies they have in place, we look at what success stories they have and we look at whether or not there is an intention and a willingness to do so and we are at the point where we are not necessarily ready to litigate and to take a harder step, but we were saying that in fact we may have to do that with some of them after we've engaged with them and they still don't show their intention to transform themselves in order to give women and men, to give an example, all workplaces should have sexual harassment policies that work well but we find that there are companies that don't even have that, there are companies that just assume that when you are at workplace you are there on your own, you have come to earn a living and they have no responsibility over women as a safety at the workplace. So we will continue to work with them but where needs be we may have to take a tougher action.
DR. MALKA	And are you finding this at different levels so for instance if it's a multi-national or if it is a national organisation or small to medium enterprises, what the level of policy is in place, do you think that it runs according to the size of the institution, the resources that they have available to be able to implement and have an adequate policy in place?
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	International bodies, because of the pressure from other countries, seem to work....to be willing to adhere, not a hundred percent, but they listen. It is those small little family owned companies where the person will tell you this is my company I worked very hard to be here, you are not going to tell me, no government is going to tell me how to run my company, that's where the biggest challenges are, but we therefore work on targeting because we are a small organisation we can't work with all of them in the country, but also it is important to note that the Employment Equity Commission that works with the Department of Labour also follows on some of these companies so the ones where the Employment Equity Commission works with, we don't bother on those ones, we select others. Sometimes where people have complained to us because sometimes people write to us and say and report that they are being discriminated against, that there are no policies that are there for them, they can be willy-nilly fired and that their salaries are not the same as their male counterparts and no-one is doing anything about that and then we intervene.

	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	You are listening to ‘Womanity – Women in Unity’ on Channel Africa, the voice of the African Renaissance, on frequency 9625 KHz, on the 31 meter band and we’re talking Gender Equality with Commissioner Mpumulwana from the Commission For Gender Equality and we’d love to receive your comments on Face book or Twitter@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	We have just been discussing the role of the Gender Commission in terms of promoting and protecting citizens in the form of equality and we’re touching base in terms of how that is being implemented, particularly in the workplace and we’ll take up the conversation now again and start to look at some of the challenges and the successes that the Gender Commission has achieved in the last few years.
DR. MALKA	Commissioner please will you elaborate on these for us?
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	We also are a society that is highly patriarchal, South Africa is a highly patriarchal society, highly religious and highly traditional and so you know to infuse a concept of gender equality in a society that says women are inferior, God created a man first and then a woman as an add on, or that the male in a rural African setting is the boss, it is very difficult for them to synergise the constitution, I’ll give you an example of some of the challenges we have dealt with. The concept of Ukuthwala; Ukuthwala is a traditional custom in most African societies and I think in some of the Asian communities where it’s early child....it’s childhood marriages. Old men marrying girls without the girl’s having a say, the families just decide that we’ll marry off our daughter because it’s convenient for us, sometimes it’s for money or sometimes they just want to make sure that their daughter is taken care of regardless of what she feels about her own future in end up out what the world presents out there and we still have that practice in South Africa and we’ve had to intervene in a few cases where..that were reported to us in KZN, in Mpumalanga, where a 14 year old was being married off to a man and money had already been paid, a lobola, and also....so we intervened there with the Department of Social Development and we saved that girl. Another case in Mpumalanga is almost one would could child trafficking because these were young girls who crossed the border from Mozambique, coming into South Africa, obviously to look for greener pastures or promised greener pastures by those who are clever, who are trying to make money out of the girls and they marry them off to men who use them virtually as slaves in their household. We had to intervene in one case, they’re still before the law, before the courts, so we can’t say much about it but these are realities of a patriarchal society that we are living with, so we do find that people embrace the constitution but when they have to behave they go against the constitution so it is a big challenge, especially in terms of gender equality. People are prepared to take human rights as human rights in a generic manner but once you put in gender then patriarchy kicks in and they are not prepared to accept it, so that’s a huge challenge that needs everyone to assist us.
DR. MALKAconsider that we have this challenge of cultural norms and what people have been doing and we have the conflict coming through on from a constitution and what is being decreed as the law of the land and that the constitution should be prevailing in the circumstances but then at the end of the day we’re having this conflict between culture and constitution.
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	Absolutely, it is a conflict and I must say that we are getting there but we are not there yet. It is when we need it most our constitution for the most vulnerable even in the sector of women where people fail us, they....women

	<p>in...the old ladies whose rights....who are violated in communities, they are raped, the young girls who are seeking a brighter future for themselves and their family because of poverty in their homes are trafficked and culture is used to abuse them, we don't like that, but also issues of inheritance; customary marriages, we still have a situation where men will marry women in terms of customary marriages in the rural areas and then when they come to the cities they take wife number two and then that's the wife who is registered and then this man dies, you can imagine what happens then when the family has got to bury, it's a matter of who is more legitimate in that setting and we therefore are pleading with our males to really respect women and treat women with dignity and we ask our women to be very mindful of getting into those situations and to be much more assertive and families to protect women against such practices.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And I think for me it's interesting that gender characteristics, they're socially constructed. The roles of men and women can and they do change over time according to our social circumstances, they're shaped by multiple factors whether that be from an economic point of view, environmental, technology, political as well as the legislative factors and I think because of our capacity for change this is what will eventually, ultimately make society a more equitable environment for all and to afford those opportunities and resources which women seem to be deprived from in certain communities, and to be able to have those opportunities and resources accessible to them so that they can perform and take a role in the decision making process of their lives.</p>
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	<p>Absolutely. Education is a tool for development we believe. We really want to applaud South Africa for reaching equality in terms of gender for young girls at primary education and exposure to education and at high school. The problem begins at university where they enter but the majority don't finish so...and some of the degrees they do, do not offer them the skills that they need for them to enter the market, but in rural areas that's even more, they drop out of school, teenage pregnancy and then the cycle begins of abuse, so it is very important for women to have economic opportunities because some women stay in abusive relationships because they have nothing and especially when they've got children, what else can they do if they're unemployed and they are in a situation where they've got children so they stay in those abusive relationships and the cycle continues because the children who are then in those relationships will probably grow up thinking it's normal to live in an abusive family situation, so economic freedom for women is very important, empowerment of women in terms of their choices is very important, but also, what is important is that patriarchy should be seen as something that goes against our constitution by all sectors of society and our young male and our young women and the boy child should grow up knowing that we live in a society should respect and....the rights of others and the dignity of women.</p>
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	<p>If you've just tuned in you are listening to 'Womanity – Women in Unity' on Channel Africa, the voice of the African Renaissance, on frequency 9625 KHz, on the 31 meter band and we're talking Gender Equality with Commissioner Thoko Mpumulwana from the Commission For Gender Equality. We would love to receive your comments on Facebook or Twitter@WomanityTalk.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>South Africa is an integral part of the continent and if, Commissioner if you can please tell us about any collaboration between your organisation and other similar organisations of state on the continent?</p>

<p>COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA</p>	<p>The Commission For Gender Equality is reaching out and we are very happy that we have a relationship with the Kenyan Commission, which is new, for gender equality. In the past the gender equality in Kenya was combined with human rights and now they have a stand-alone and we have established a relationship and a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed because we would like to ensure that we work together. We also have a very close relationship that we have developed with the new Commission in Zimbabwe for Gender Equality, we have a lot to learn from them because they have had a women's ministry as a ministry for a long time so some of their strategies on how to infuse such issues at a community level are worth learning from as a country, and there are more, we are planning to bring together in South Africa, if possible, some other commissions in the continent. Next year we plan to have a summit hosted by the Commission for Gender Equality to just talk about what are the issues in the continent. We do have a charter that was signed at the AU level and we also have a SADC Declaration and on the basis of those declarations and charters we just want to reflect and take stock and say as Africans how far are we doing and how far have we gone and are we improving the status of women, is the life of a woman in Africa a life worth living or is it a life not worth living, issues of peace for instance. The people who get affected most when there are conflicts, as we now know, that Sudan is now going back and that there are still pockets in the DRC where there is fighting, women and children are victims, they are used as pawns for war and they are raped and they are displaced and that is not good for development of the continent and we have to work together to make sure that Africa becomes a beacon of hope because the next century is really our century as Africans, so we must get our act together.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>And do you find that there is considerable cross-pollination between the different institutions across different countries, so for instance you spoke about Kenya, Zimbabwe, the DRC as well as South Africa , that we're starting to take learnings from environments and situations that happen in one organisation or country and apply those learnings into another?</p>
<p>COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA</p>	<p>Yes there is, there is a lot, in fact what I also like is that the non-government organisations, the civil society organisations are very active in the continent even though there is limited funding, but they are out there making their voice heard in terms of what they do not like in their own...in policies in their various countries, I'll give you an example. We are struggling as a people of the continent to accept the issues of gays and lesbians in our continent, we want to believe and we want to actually think that it's un-African, they don't exist and in some communities they are killed, they are...they are criminalised and so if you are found to be gay or lesbian you are charged in courts of law and those of some of the challenges we have to deal with and be honest with ourselves in the continent because in reality we are pretending that they are not there. They are there, they are part of our community, they have a contribution to make and they have rights too.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>Well ultimately equality is about having no bars on discrimination and we're to remove all areas of discrimination from society and I understand that one of the institutions that you work with quite closely with is Gender Links and they run numerous studies, I think they're active in over 15 different countries according to some of the information that I've seen... where they monitor indicators of the status of women</p>
<p>COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA</p>	<p>....yes....</p>

DR. MALKA where they monitor indicators of the status of women, so whether it is from governance to education, economy, sexual and reproductive health, HIV and AIDS and well as the presence in the media.
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	Yes, yes, Gender Links has started this a long time ago to just look at indicators of where we are as African countries or state parties and it's very interesting to note that the research is not about what they find on reports written by state parties, they take those reports, but in addition they do surveys to find out from people where they think their state parties are. It is good to note that people have actually given, especially in SADC, they've given state parties thumbs up in terms of policies that empower women but of course there are still a number of areas where people are saying their governments could do better, so that's what Gender Links does. It is called a Gender Barometer, so it's almost like a dipstick, you put in there you just want to check the status of each country and it's done throughout the countries where Gender Links works.
DR. MALKA	And cumulatively the work that you do is the work that Gender Links does, the work that is happening from the different institutions in various governments and countries, they're all contributing to the likes of the Millennium Development Goals which we want to aspire and achieve by 2015, and I think that a significant portion of them are, of the Millennium Development Goals are really orientated around gender equality and women's empowerment whether it range from universal primary education to I think goal three is the one which really operates on promoting gender equality and empowering women to goal four – reducing child mortality and five – improved maternal health and combat.... and six – combats other diseases that we're plagued with in our continent, particularly with the likes of HIV and Malaria.
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	Yes, yes, they are interrelated those goals, those MDG's. The one that is a real challenge is the first one, the one on poverty. We really are struggling in the continent and now giving a personal view and a view that I share with a number of people in the various organisations where we work is that until and unless we deal with poverty the others will come back to haunt us because in a poor household children won't learn well, in a poor household where there is hopelessness and that there is no hope for the future and no food to eat, no ability, there's lethargy and lack of creativity and therefore we have to make sure that all state parties work hard to fight poverty and to make sure that the basic minimums that are set in terms of how to break the cycle of poverty are met in all households in our countries, because once that is done, then the issue of gender equality comes in because then people are able to take the opportunities that are presented before them and then the issue of child mortality is dealt with; the issue of disease is dealt with because people are empowered with knowledge and also people know that they can get out there and get opportunities because poverty literally takes away your energy to even see doors which are open for you.
DR. MALKA	And speaking from your experience and the vast work that you've done in this area how would you see how we can improve and accelerate the development to reduce poverty levels, what type of interventions if you had the opportunity to do anything, do you think would really improve on that process and helping us get there quicker?
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	We believe in one of the organisations, we have tried a model that we saw working in Chile, in Tunisia and Brazil, a model which says if you are serious about fighting poverty you can't take it at a superficial level, it has to zoom into a family level. Each household must make a commitment in terms of where it wants to go and the government is there to handhold and

	<p>to make sure that a basket of services that are available are taken advantage of but the family is assisted out of that, I'll give you an example. Education, housing, water, making sure children get a healthcare, making sure that every person in the house is known to exist in the state through every child having a birth certificate registered at Home Affairs and people having ID documents so that if they are unemployed they can be linked with the Public Works Programme of expanded.....because to get a little income, but they have to sign a contract with the state to make sure that they really stick to agreements made; children go to school, they are supervised and they pass because it is true that long-term poverty can be.....of course it is important to have short-term measures of the social grants, of the different types so that people can have food on their table but if we are real about fighting poverty it's got to be a long-term programme of investing in people, starting at household level.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And do you see that these interventions are opportunities that we can almost do a test and learn model taking information and knowledge that we have from the Chileans and implementing them into a sector of society so that we can prove the effectiveness of an opportunity like that, to mobilise and improve on poverty?</p>
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	<p>Some municipalities have partnered with South African Women in Dialogue in doing just that and it is working wonders and there are other municipalities that in the war on poverty that government has adopted after we had reported to government, some areas in the Free State have also adopted that, but unfortunately there's a...with government there's a tendency to work in silo's. For each to be really successful all government departments should be able to synergise their work and be able to focus and target areas because if the Department of Housing is not involved and people have no houses, or there is no water, or the Education Department does not know which children are the most vulnerable in a particular area, then it is not.....and what targets are being set in that particular community to be able to move them out of poverty, but well, it's a long road, we will probably get there one day.</p>
AD BREAK	
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you Commissioner on the great work that you and your office has been doing and for sharing your time with us today and we'd love to see more of you in the future to discuss other subjects which we didn't have an opportunity to touch on today, but if I could ask you please in closing our discussion, what words of wisdom would you like to pass on to our women in Africa listening to this show?</p>
COMMISSIONER MPUMULWANA	<p>Well Dr. Malka, I don't know if I have words of wisdom, I just have experience that tells me that we should not give up, that we are not created to be subservient, we were given earth to take care of and we should take opportunities that we have and we should be in solidarity with one another and never leave other people in conditions that are not in line with our human rights and dignity culture, so we have to work very, very hard to work together even with the civil society organisation to change the lives of people in worse off situations and attain gender equality because women are in the majority in the continent and if women are empowered the continent will turn around.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you Commissioner and I would like to end our discussion on gender equality and with a view of achieving opportunities by remembering some of Nelson Mandela's words, which I quote: "<i>There is no passion to be found playing small, in settling for a life that is less than the one that you are capable of living</i>". Madiba you are deeply missed already so thank you to our listeners,</p>

	you have been listening to 'Womanity – Women in Unity' on Channel Africa, the voice of the African Renaissance.
	PROGRAMME END