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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: MRS NOZABELO RUTH BHENGU – CHAIRPERSON PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

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	Joining us on the line today is Mrs. Nozabelo Ruth Bhengu who is a member of parliament serving as Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Small Business Development. Additionally she has chaired both the Portfolio Committee on Infrastructure, Economic Development and Tourism as well as the Portfolio Committee on Provisional and Local Government and has been a member of the Portfolio Committee on Sport and Recreation.
DR. MALKA	Welcome to the show!
MRS BHENGU	Thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to interact with the listeners.
DR. MALKA	Mrs. Bhengu can you please tell us more about the committee that you're heading up; what are some of the tasks and what does the committee aim to achieve?
MRS BHENGU	The Portfolio Committee on Small Business Development was established in 2014 after the General Elections. It came as a result of the establishment of the.....Department that is charged with the responsibility of focusing on the development of small businesses which would then include SMME's and Co-operatives. That decision was also informed by the fact that both SMME's and cooperatives kept on complaining that they were not receiving adequate attention and as a result their development was not taking off the ground in the manner in which they would want to see those.....developing. Then the Portfolio Committee itself is responsible for ensuring that issues of radical socio-economic transformation are addressed by the Department of Small Business Development, particularly the implementation of the realisation of the National Development.....in as far as the creation of the 9.9 million new jobs by 2030 which are the 90% of the expected 11 million new jobs by 2030 in terms of the NDP. So the Portfolio Committee then is also responsible for assessing and holding the Department of Small Business Development accountable for executing its mandate which is to champion the development of our SMME's and Co-operatives in South Africa and also co-ordinating activities that are related to the of SMME's and Co-operatives.
DR. MALKA	You mentioned that part of the responsibilities within small business development ministry that it's about creating and contributing to radical socio-economic transformation in South Africa and with that we know that one of the biggest contributors is going to be within the entrepreneurial space, so as you mentioned SMME's and Co-ops. You also mentioned that we're due to be trying to create 9.9 million new jobs by 2030; within the small business development space does Africa feature in the committee's strategic plans at all?
MRS BHENGU	That is the ultimate goal but at the moment it doesn't feature. Although that is an ultimate goal, if you look at also the responsibility given to South Africa in terms of leading the process at.....level.

DR. MALKA	So I would imagine we want to fix ourselves first; make sure that we've established the infrastructure; that the correct mandates are in place with the appropriate government ministries and then once that is in place we will look at better strategic alliances with our counterparts on the continent.
MRS BHENGU	<p>That is exactly what I am saying. The first thing the department needed to do was to continue providing services because we could not just stop them abruptly and say I am a new creature and I will do things differently and then the second step was to say how do I structure myself and how do I develop a structure to plan that relates to the new mandate of the department and I just want to explain this new mandate of the department, how does it differ to the mandate ofYou see in the development of SMME's and Co-operatives the mandate of the Department of Small Business is almost similar to the mandate to the role that was placed by the Department of Sports and Recreation when South Africa was preparing to host the 2010 Super World Cup; that is what the what the department was expected to do. The project here is job creation through SMME's and Co-operatives, transformation of the economy to benefit people that had been excluded, those that are at the bottom of the ladder so that we then reduce the number of people who are dependent on social grants and free services from government, that is the mandate of the department in order to develop SMME's and Co-operatives, to make them participate in mainstream economy because they are currently excluded. And what are those things? One of them is access to lend. Small businesses and cooperatives don't have access to lend because they are poor people who have been excluded in mainstream economy, they don't have access to finance, you have to restructure that and ensure that they have that access. They don't have access to adequate skills and it also needs to look at how you are going to be fixing that. But in terms of infrastructure also, you would understand that these Co-operatives and SMME's reside inwhere there is under-development, there is no adequate infrastructure like the transport infrastructure, the telecommunications infrastructure, the energy infrastructure as well as water and sanitation infrastructure which is what makes small businesses in urban areas succeed, but in the case of small businesses in rural areas and townships and peri-urban areas you would not find the adequate infrastructure, meaning that even if you were having a farm that is doing very, very well in rural areas, land hasn't been provided by a Chief or a traditional leader, the infrastructure there would not make it possible for that farm that is doing well to transport produce from that farm to the market, meaning that the responsibility then of the Department of Small Business Development is to call these departments that are mandated to provide transport infrastructure, energy infrastructure, water and sanitation infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure; sit down with them andan agreement which would then make those departments align their plan for provision of such things and align their budget to actually enable those small businesses and cooperatives to take off the ground, that is the responsibility of this department so they.....agreement and the co-ordination of services and activities related to development of SMME's and Co-operatives relate to that which then makes it different from what was done by DPI, here we only focus on granting, only focus on training; we would only focus on provision of loans through.....</p>
DR. MALKA	So there's a tremendous amount of collaboration that takes place, lots of integration between different counterparts within the ministry space, so having people responsible for the infrastructure component with energy, with telecoms to help enable our SMME's and Co-operatives within the rural environments.

	Can you tell us under the small business development umbrella, are there any specific programmes which aim to aid women?
MRS BHENGU	Yes, the majority of the registered cooperatives and small businesses are actually owned by women and the reason for that is that people that find it difficult to get employment from rural areas are women based on their lack of access to education and lack of access to adequate skills and also due to the fact that men would move away from rural areas to seek work in cities and leave women back at home to look after the children, so they also find ways of having to earn an income on their own. So most of the registered SMME's and registered Co-operatives are actually owned by women and even those that would have men as members but they will be few numbers.
DR. MALKA	That's an interesting statistic I didn't realise that we had more women than men focusing on the entrepreneurial journey.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Mrs. Nozabelo Ruth Bhengu who is a member of parliament and currently serving as Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Small Business Development.
	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, also available on DSTV, Channel 902. Today we're talking to Mrs Nozabelo Ruth Bhengu who is a member of parliament currently serving as Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Small Business Development. We would love to receiver your comments on Twitter@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	In the previous segment of the show we spoke about the components of the Small Business Development Committee, its whole purpose of being, one of the emphasis as being on radical social-economic transformation in South Africa. We spoke about some of its mandates, how it will enable SMME's and Co-operatives, helping access to land, improving skills provision, facilitation of finance, improvements on infrastructure particularly in the rural space where it relates to transportation, telecommunications, energy, water and sanitation and we left off talking about the number of women opening and operating small businesses. Mrs. Bhengu could you please elaborate a little bit more on the number of women who have opened small businesses and co-operatives?
MRS BHENGU	What I would want to clarify on this issue of more women having small businesses. There are different levels of development in the area of small businesses. There is what we call survivalist, it's those that live from hand to mouth; those that you would spot on the street as street vendors, there are many of those and they are women. Most men would migrate from rural areas and small towns to seek work in bigger towns and that was as a result of the discovery ofin South Africa, it's a long story. So that then created a situation where women would find ways of then making sure that they are able to look after children but they had to put plate on the table for them, so the issue of them having more women owned small businesses as compared to men owned small businesses relate to the category that we are talking about. We are talking survivalist, we are talking micro but when you move to medium and macro you are moved up the hierarchy of the target group that we are dealing with; you would then find more men owned small businesses at medium level and macro level. The same would apply also with the co-operatives; more co-operatives are owned by women and the reason for that is there are more women that would group themselves and come together as opposed to men.

DR. MALKA	That's an interesting dynamic that we've got this collectivism surrounding women as opposed to the individualism that is associated with men. Whilst we're on the topic of women, on the 8 th March women across the world commemorated International Women's Day, celebrating the progress that women have achieved and also looking at the gaps that still need to be filled, in your opinion which areas do you think we need to build on the most to benefit women in the future?
MRS BHENGU	I think that we need to relook in the manner in which we are promoting small businesses particularly in terms of women, taking into account that women also set up welfare organisations that look after the elderly, organisations that look after vulnerable children, women affected by sexual violence or domestic violence. We need to position development of the socio-economic transformation to position that agenda in relation to community economic development as opposed to promoting individualistic development that results with a few millionaires in our communities whilst the majority of the people in those communities survive on social grants and government hand-outs. So in other words I am saying our forecasts should not only be on economic growth and job creation, our forecasts should be more on economic growth that also facilitates participation of the entire community in the economy which then results with communities that become self-sufficient and able to resolve their own social problems, build their own welfare centres as opposed to continuously depending on government to provide,centres, to build the sports facilities, to set up the rehabilitation centres. That is what the National Development Plan calls on us to do, to have active citizens that are participating in their own development; that is the mindset that we need to actually start developing. We should not be materialistic driven, we should view our economic development, our participation in the economy as small businesses but also to try and partner with government andback to communities where we come from.
DR. MALKA	I agree with you that a mindset shift is vitally important in terms of moving away from poverty and trying to develop more sustainable opportunities and as you said to start to develop a sense of community economic development rather than on an individualistic basis. But in trying to achieve that we need certain enabling factors so would you consider skills development, education to be part of that enabling function to assist people to get to that point?
MRS BHENGU	Definitely, I have actually developed a model that speaks to that and I call the model the Co-operative Based Community Economic Development Model where we then take the existing cooperatives in the community and position them as a catalyst for attracting investment by both the private sector and the public sector. In the private sector I am then saying let progressive businesses come in as equity investors to partner with communities so that they are then able to transfer the skills that they have...they already have and share their technology that they have developed and also open the markets to people who would not have access to markets and also open an opportunity an access to finance because the co-operatives on their own, if they form a secondary cooperative, when they knock at a bank the bank is going to say you are a risk we can't give you a loan, even if your business idea is sound, but if they come with an equity partner who has contributed a 20% shareholding and who has committed that I understand the market I will hold you by hand and I have the skills, I will transfer the skills, I have developed the technology, you have crossed a very big bridge that co-operatives on their own would not have been able to cross. So you are then bringing in the private sector as a partner as

	<p>opposed to a competitor, that then also brings in government to see the need for providing the infrastructure because this co-operative is going to be working with an established and a knowledgeable business partner that is going to hold them by hand and show them all the ropes in this kind of business and the benefits to this business, progressive business investor is that currently there are few tax payers whereas if we then take the people that are sitting in the social grant register and theregister who are currently not paying tax and make them productive, the cheque deductions will go down and the revenue base of the municipality will be broadened, the revenue base of SARS will be broadened because there are more people that will be paying tax but also the expenditure of the Department of Social Development and also the municipality that are providing free services will go down. So you are shifting budgets from being a consumption budget into a productive budget.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>That's a very important point and I read, in fact, just today I was looking at the spending programmes for the next three years from a South African budgetary point of view and it indicated that 490.4 billion Rand would be spent on social grants over the next three years and you rightly say that in terms of our biggest contributions to the tax revenue, it comes from personal income tax so if we are able to have more people entering the workforce it becomes more sustainable, it reduces the spending programmes in other areas, it reduces the pressure of the tax burden on the individual, so I think your model is a fantastic one.</p>
MRS BHENGU	<p>I also believe in that and I am getting a lot of support, not only from the co-operatives in terms of the model, the people that are very supportive of the model is the banking sector. They are saying if you bring in the private sector as an equity partner with markets, with the skills transfer, with the technology we are happy to give the loans which would then also reduce the burden from government to provide grants to SMME's and cooperatives as a start-up fund. The government will then forecast on feasibility studies to produce a master plan for economic development in each and every</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And whilst we are talking about driving the economy forwards, it requires leadership and one of the key areas in our programme 'Womanity – Women in Unity' which is a gender based programme, is building female leadership capacity, I find is important for the future of women not only to South Africa but also to the continent; as Chairperson of a portfolio committee how do you see female leadership in South Africa?</p>
MRS BHENGU	<p>I think that there are many capable women in South Africa and also I would commend the current government for giving space to women and championing women empowerment and ensuring that women are actually given the opportunity to provide leadership. But not only that, I am not sure whether people understand that when we get into parliament and you are made a chairperson of a portfolio committee, you are not just thrown in the deep end of the sea, you are also given the necessary support in terms of being provided with the training that would enable you to navigate your way. So I am saying that as women in South Africa and as women in Africa we have these opportunities, let us grab that opportunity with both hands but that doesn't come without challenges. It is a world of competition, we don't need to sit back and expect that everything will be handed over to us in a tray, we also have to fend for ourselves and support each other and also be able to tell each other when there are weaknesses and come closer to help each other and not only look also at the weak side of a person but, when such moments come I expect that other women will be able to give me a feedback of what my weaknesses are and also help me to overcome those weaknesses but at the same time commend me for the</p>

	good that I am able to do.
DR. MALKA	And you're right when you talk about the opening of opportunities for women within South African government, we currently have a 42% female representation in parliament and on that note, do you think that South Africa is ready for a woman president?
MRS BHENGU	South Africa has always been ready for any capable person to lead the country and if a woman is capable to lead, a woman then should be given...would be given that opportunity but the issue of a woman president to me should be debated in the context of what is it that we want to implement as a programme and what kind of skills do we require for us to implement that programme and who amongst us possesses those skills, whether that person is a woman or a man the determining factor should be the programme and the determining factor should be the skills and the determining factor should be the ability to lead. Then the issue of whether that person is a woman or a man should be the last thing that we should be debating. So the issue then of South Africa being ready to have a woman president, South Africa has always been ready to have a woman president.
DR. MALKA	So in your perspective as a country we have got sufficient adequately capable women within the relevant structures who have got the competency and as a nation we are ready to accept a woman as a president but the fact of the matter is whoever is elected needs to be competent irrespective of their gender.
MRS BHENGU	Yes. For me the issue that need to be discussed first; what stage of development are we in, what programmes do we want to.....what skills are required in order for those programmes to be effective and who is the best team because the country also does not only depend on the president. You may have a capable president but if the leadership collective is not good enough to make the country move forward that good president would not be able to achieve anything so moving forward in a country does not depend on an individual, it depends on a leadership collective.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Mrs. Nozabelo Ruth Bhengu who is a member of parliament serving as Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Small Business Development.
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DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Mrs.Nozabelo Ruth Bhengu who is a member of parliament serving as Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Small Business Development. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	In the previous segment of the show Mrs. Bhengu elaborated on some of the quantifiers with women occupying more of the entrepreneurial roles, particularly at the survivalist and micro level; she also spoke about one of the models that she's introduced which focuses on the co-operative and collective economic development. Mrs. Bhengu turning now towards a personal perspective, throughout the various radio programmes that we've had one of the questions that I've asked all my guests who have made tremendous achievements in their respective fields is about some of the factors that have contributed to their success. Some people speak about hard work, others talk about perseverance, some speak about an influencing role model in their lives; can you tell us what have been some of the key drivers to your success?
MRS BHENGU	The key drivers to my success is to see poverty being addressed adequately. I'm from a very poor background, I am a school drop-out. I am where I am because I was given a second chance after having dropped out from school by working with a non-governmental organisation that gave me the skills that I could not acquire through formal education and that showed me that given an opportunity, even a woman from the deep rural areas of

	<p>.....where I was born where I grew up sleeping on a grass mat, fetching water from the river and some women even deprived from going to school from where I am is what has driven me to focus on community economic development and I am very active in.....where I was born to find ways of facilitating developmentand encourage those young people that are finding themselves in the same situation that I found myself in theseand also to assist those that I grew up with who could not find work, I go back to them, I went back to them and organised them to form co-operatives and I am working with them so that they can also earn an income of their own. So some people get motivated by having role models, what motivates me is the desire to see poverty going away and also to believe in self-reliance and self-sufficiency that you don't need to go to another person and ask for a job for you to earn an income, you can also do it on your own if you are given the necessary support and you are understood that you are not in the situation that you find yourself in because you desired to be in that situation, you are a victim of the circumstance. So that is what drives me to focus more on co-operative and community economic development. I don't want to go back home and have people coming to me and saying you are a member of parliament you are driving a nice car, can you give me R10 and then I'm rejoiced by giving a person that I went to school with R10. I want to go back home and say here I am, I am exposed to this kind of information, I can assist you to develop from the level you are in and be like me.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you for sharing some of the stories of your moments in your life growing up, I think that that is an incredibly admirable intention to help others from where you came from and to not be it a case of hand-outs but rather hand-ups so that people can develop, that they have self-reliance, that they become self-sufficient.</p>
MRS BHENGU	<p>Can I also put that in a different way?</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Yes go ahead.</p>
MRS BHENGU	<p>Yes...I am a Christian and I go to church. I was asked to serve in the welfare committee and the welfare committee in our church is a committee that encourages members of our congregation to bring the clothes that they are no longer using and the pots, or anything that you are no longer using so that those that need those things can then get them, so during the year we will have a certain month on which those things are brought to the church. I refused, and bluntly refused to serve in that structure and then I told my priest that no, I want us to establish a development committee in our congregation and I'm going to serve in that committee and then teach members of the congregation we must establish our own co-operative and as we speak today there is a co-operative that is owned by the church that I am a member of, The House of Glory, agricultural co-operative. I facilitated that it got funding and the young people that are unemployed in our church are trained in skills and the church is looking at building its own bible school through the income that will come from that cooperative. So I don't believe in hand-outs, I believe in skills development and in making a person self-sufficient and self-reliant.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And it contributes to people's dignity that they're doing something meaningful and they're getting a tangible output from it and also in terms of building the community that they come from. Mrs. Bhengu we are unfortunately running out of time, can I please ask you in closing the programme today, could you please share a few words of inspiration which you would like to pass onto young girls and women in Africa who are listening to this show?</p>

MRS. BHENGU	What I would like to say to young women and women in Africa is that your past should not determine your future. What you want to be and where you want to be should be what will determine your future, so strive to be who you want to be.
DR. MALKA	Thank you very much for that message. Mrs. Bhengu thank you very much for joining us today it's been a pleasure having you on the show and for sharing your story and more importantly in terms of your message of hope and the fact that our past does not dictate our future.
MRS. BHENGU	I just wanted to say thank you for giving me the opportunity.
DR. MALKA	Thank you Mrs. Bhengu.
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