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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: MS ZINGISWA LOSI – PRESIDENT OF COSATU

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 today on the line is the newly appointed President of COSATU; the Congress of South African Trade Unions, who is also the organisations first female president; Ms Zingiswa Losi. Welcome to the show!
MS LOSI	Thank you for having me and also I'm greeting your listeners.
DR. MALKA	Thank you so much. First of all, congratulations on your new appointment!
MS LOSI	Thank you so much!
DR. MALKA	I saw a quote on your bio page on the COSATU website which I think is very reflective of your achievements and I quote <i>"I would love to see women taking their rightful place in the Federation, not for the purposes of achieving gender equity, but for the transformation of the broader society; this will go a long way towards eradicating the patriarchal tendencies that still exist in our society."</i> So given your new role, how do you feel about your accomplishment?
MS LOSI	Indeed it is such a humbling experiencing, but overwhelming, particularly when you make reference to that quote that I made in 2009 when I got elected into the position of the Second Deputy President in the Federation and for me it is not just an achievement for myself but it represents an achievement for all the women in our country but also across our borders in South Africa and in the continent at large. It also breaks the barriers and the that have been placed by men and society, believing that a women's place has only limitation to what they can be able to do in terms of what society expects of us. So indeed I must say that this is such a humbling experience but I hope that women will be able to take it forward and use it as a step towards the total emancipation of women in our country.
DR. MALKA	I think it's a fantastic achievement and as you said this is about setting the tone, setting the direction, becoming an example to women to take action, effectively as a role model. Now reflecting for a moment; the Congress of South African Trade Unions was launched in 1985 and at its inception it represented less than 500 000 workers organised in 33 unions and currently I believe the organisation has over 2,000,000 members; could you please tell us more about some of the strategic objectives of COSATU?
MS LOSI	COSATU's current membership it sits at 1.7 million and the strategic objectives of the federation is amongst others to unite workers of this country within the federation itself, uniting the working class and international solidarity to workers across the continent and internationally in other countries. So and also it is to also liberate workers in...particularly women from the triple challenges that women are faced with of inequality, poverty and unemployment, so it is those are the strategic objectives of our federation.
DR.MALKA	Can you tell us a little bit more in terms of the dynamics from working without or rather working with your counterparts in Africa?
MS LOSI	Working in Africa I must also make mention that I am also the President of the Southern African Trade Union Court Meeting Council (SATUCC)

	<p>which is in Botswana it's offices where we are coordinating the work of all federations or most federations in the SADC region and I must say that a lot still needs to be done when we are to then go and deal with the issues in Africa, particularly with regards to the issues of women, we have had a number of challenges even at the level of SATUCC but we have managed to make some meaningful strides in relation to introducing and adopting gender policies and gender equality policies within the SATUCC as an organisation, that is going to form basis for all trade unions in the SADC region. So COSATU have played a significant and meaningful role in the African continent but also internationally on...particularly on gender matters.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Gender seems to be a strong area in your focus and you mentioned already that you help deal with the triple challenges that women experience from inequality, poverty and unemployment and women's participation in the labour force has important macro as well as economic contributions, but globally in much of the private sector, women seem to be underpaid in comparison to their male counterparts, earning on average 23% less than men, they work in lower ranking roles and they're over represented in the unskilled labour force; what are your views on how we can improve on this picture for women?</p>
MS LOSI **please note audibility not clear**	<p>It has always also been an issue that COSATU has been dealing with, that's why in our own country we have been vocal and fought for the amendment that spoke to the equal pay for work of equal value because it was the basis of that understanding and the reality that women are paid less than their counterparts. Now, what we are busy with as a federation, is to also assist our sister trade unions in the African continent and abroad, I must also say that in terms of our international work as a federation we have taken too seriously that in the provinces that we have, five provinces, we have twinned them with countries that we are sharing borders with, exactly for us for us to be able to share our experiences over there because what we also understand and appreciate is that women in particular, from these countries, are coming into our borders, entering South Africa to work as domestic workers or as farm labourers and they get exploited at the worst case. Some of them you will find them in the hospitality industry where they get more exploited so it is for that reason that we have even taken the international work very, very serious because we understand theto the livelihoods of our.....South Africans and particularly workers in this country.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And is the message getting out to the public that this is what COSATU does; this is what...how it is able to protect the workforce so that people are not unfairly prejudiced or taken advantage of?</p>
MS LOSI	<p>Well I may agree to a certain extent that people know and the reason for that it is because we do publications; we have shop steward magazines that will go out, of course they will be going out to the workplaces, but also we do share the information through facebook and all other IT related sites where we are able to share this information but also what we do, because we understand that workers are members of society and we also would call general meetings where even including members of the public at times would attend so that we are able to report on the progress that we are making. So I may not say a hundred percent that everyone would be aware but at least we do make these publications, including media briefing, but at least I must also admit that a lot more needs to be done.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>You've given us some insight in terms of the objectives of COSATU, spoken about the international relations, looked at the emphasis within the gender space and assisting women; can you share with us, and I know this is early days, have</p>

	you got any specific milestones that you want to achieve in COSATU as President?
MS LOSI	The milestones that one would love to achieve, firstly it is to see women, as you have quite eloquently quoted the quote that I have made, occupying a strategic provision in the trade union and in society and the reason for that it is because women's capacity has always...is there, there's no doubt about it, but the reason why women at times are not being seen or coming out it is because of other hindrances that I would want us to see dealing with it is the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace and sexual harassment also in the trade union themselves because that becomes a hindrance to the development of women. So if COSATU can be able to deal with these issues of sexual harassment and sexual violence in the workplace and including in the trade union movement, I think that would have achieved the milestone of also untapping the leadership that exists within the...within women themselves.
DR. MALKA	Yes it provides an enabling environment for them where they can function and know that they're safe.
MS LOSI	Yes indeed, yes indeed.
DR. MALKA	Ms Losi, being a female leader in Africa sometimes touches on sensitive points like culture, religion, tradition; we've spoken about patriarchy already today; in your experience do you think that women leaders face different challenges to their male counterparts?
MS LOSI	Indeed, indeed, women do face different...because there's a lot of expectations; remember society has always created an expectation of what are the roles of women, also including on the issues that you have mentioned of religion, culture and which at times can become a hindrance to the development of a woman. So I must admit that those are the issues that women are facing but they are not the same, depending on where the person is So those are the issues that we need tackle so that women are not discriminated on the basis of those issues because as we always say that women are a non-entity, they are also human beings and they have a right to be.
DR. MALKA	So true. Staying with the topic of women in leadership, I think that building female leadership capacity is incredibly important for the future of women, not just in our country, our continent, but across the world, but there don't seem to be many female leaders, whether we look at this from a political point of view or from an organisation perspective; do you think more countries or organisations are ready for a female president?
MS LOSI Not clearly audible in parts	Well one would think that every country and every organisation is ready. The issue that we need to be also dealing with is also to say that are the environments created conducive for women to then match because women are there, women are ready to lead, now are the conditions conducive for them to do so. One of the reasons that I'm raising this is because currently we also have challenges as workers where women when they are expected to go and attend meetings that will also capacitate them, those meetings will be convened during odd times where women are expected to play a motherly role to their family. It also brings hindrances to those women in order for them to be capacitated but also for them to be able to be identified as equal leaders to men. Now if we are able to deal with those issues and also address that the issue of taking care of a family cannot be an issue that must be imposed and be expected that it is also the responsibility of a man because parents, being a parent it takes both mother and a father of a child. So once we stop domesticating women, women are there, they are leaders already because they do take care of the household but if we

	<p>continue to domesticate them then we are going to definitely going to have these challenges that women who are ready to lead are being kept busy behind the stove, they are being kept busy taking care of the babies, not because there is anything wrong with it but the challenge is that the time for them to get exposure becomes limited or does not exist at all.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Yes so it's about being able to balance or redistribute what has traditionally been regarded as women's roles, which is generally unpaid labour, and start to share that load within the family environment so that women who want to lead have the opportunity to do so.</p>
MS LOSI	<p>Exactly, exactly, and also what must stop is the guilt that is being given to women leaders, you know, at times when we are busy doing the work that you are elected to do and the times you don't have much time to give to your family, you will realise that people will call you names. People will say that you do not behave like a mother, you know, you have no emotion, you are more acting like a snake that gives birth to its kids and to its eggs and leaves them there and they will hatch at their own and they will, you know, then they will walk away. So when society stops making women to feel guilty for being leaders it will also help us in embracing women for what they are good at, beyond being mothers, but being leaders also. So it also has to do with how we are being socialised and also dealing with what is expected by society defining the roles of women.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And quite frankly society seems to be judging men and women differently.</p>
MS LOSI	<p>Indeed, indeed. You know at times you would also realise that once you are elected as a woman leader society will begin to look at things as to whom you have dated in the past and how many marriages have you had and they will use that as a measurement of your capacity to lead, but when men are taking leadership positions, none of those issues matter, even if men are having obscure relationships that are outside the family being married, no-one raises it as the issue that also would have to make a determination whether that man is still relevant to lead society, but women are subjected to those issues and I think that it is important for society to also respect women for what they are elected to.....measure them in terms of their own capabilities and in terms of the work that they are doing other than what their personal lives arebecause no person is perfect and so men and women are no different in how we want to live our lives but that's got nothing to do with how we lead and the type of leadership capabilities that we talk of.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>You've raised some very important points about having a conducive environment, about adjusting our frame of thinking in terms of socialisation and measuring women for their capabilities; how do you think we can...or rather what do you think is required to build female leadership more appropriately?</p>
MS LOSI	<p>Well one is to build on what women already have because my understanding and experience has been that women are goodand if you are to take that and women can express themselves, leave alone the fact that at times we are told we are emotional beings, hey you know we show how we feel through emotions. But I think that is a good thing because we are able to deal with issues and let them pass and continue and move forward, so it's one issue that we already possess, so I think we just need to strengthen what women have, but also, secondly for me, it is also to ensure that where women are, there are projects that are going to allow women to explore those qualities that already exist and give them different roles and responsibilities, build their self-confidence but also make them to master themselves. You know mastering and mastering yourself for me is very key because people when they are to identify your weaknesses, they will play on</p>

	<p>those weaknesses because they understand that your emotions are going to come out, you are no longer going to think like a leader, you are going to think as an individual and then they are going to collapse you at that time. I think self-mastering is important because once you begin to understand yourself and you begin to understand your strengths and weaknesses you know also how to use them as you lead your organisation.</p>
DR. MALKA	So knowing yourself gives you your strength; how you can defend against the weaknesses that you know and to counter them.
MS LOSI	Exactly.
DR. MALKA	I'd like to hear your opinion on the value of role models because as you rightly said at the beginning of the show, becoming the first female president of COSATU, looking at where women are positioned in leadership, these do provide examples for other women to look up to and potentially emulate.
MS LOSI	Role models are very, very important and as much as they are very important, our children must also be able to understand their own values because many people can be role models to different people and it depends on the type of values that you live up to you are able to choose your own role models. But I would say that those role models are very, very important and those that are seen to be role models need to understand that so that they understand the impact that they have towards society and what kind of society they want to contribute in building so that they are conscious of their actions, they are conscious of what they say and do in public because they would have appreciated what others have been senior or junior to them on what they see from them and how they take them as their role models. So being a role model is very key and very important but I think also we need to understand the impact that we have and thethat we have in society in building a society that we can be proud of tomorrow and we are able to raise the future generation.
DR. MALKA	Very strong statement.
DR. MALKA	Today we are talking to the newly appointed president of COSATU; Ms Zingiswa Losi. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	Ms Losi we are now coming towards the latter part of the show and one of the questions that I ask all my guests on this programme who've made tremendous achievements in their respective fields of expertise is about the factors that have contributed to their success. Some people speak about hard work; others talk about perseverance; in your opinion what have been some of the key drivers to your success?
MS LOSI	For me it has been as I've alluded to the issue of mastering myself, understanding myself and also the issue of perseverance, endurance, you know and also being able to separate myself from my work and I take that as part of mastering myself because what has kept me going through all the challenges that I have been confronted with in my career, in this line of work that I have been doing that is male dominated, there were many potholes on the way but what has kept me going was the issue of being able to separate myself from the position that I occupy because that has enabled me not to be emotional and because at that time I understood that as people deal with issues you can view them to be so personal and they can defend themselves that these issues are organisational issues and you have a right to discuss them and once you take them personally you can become emotional because now you are directing them to yourself as a person, but if you are able to separate yourself from the position, you are able to be objective about what is being raised and you will be able to lead because by the time you resolve that issue you will still remain as a leader that will still

	<p>be able to lead those that have a different view from you. So that is what has kept me going for all the years that I have been a leader in the federation and also as a woman that has been under a lot of attack but I have managed to rise above those because those are the three pillars that I have lived by.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Those are great pieces of advice, especially the ability to distance yourself from your work so that your identity doesn't get lost and convoluted as you keep this separatedness between work and yourself. Can you share with us who have been some of the strong women in your life?</p>
MS LOSI	<p>Oh yes, my mother. My mother she passed on on 20th April this year and today is her birthday. She would have been 80 years of age, she has been a strong pillar and a role model for me. You know as I grew up when I was going through many things, my mom would be firm but also tell me, you know, in a voice of a mother that is full of love that you must be able to toughen up, the world is not going to play according to your feelings and how you want things to be. Stand up for yourself but also do not distance yourself from the people that you.....because when you do that you must understand how people think and how people view yourself, so by being closer to them, that will help you to understand them better and when you respond to issues and you react to them, you react to them understanding where they are standing on many issues. So she has been quite a role model for me and you know yesterday when I was duly elected as the president of the federation I gave that honour to my mother because had she not been tougher to me, had she not been honest with me on how life is and that life owes me nothing, it is up to me to shape myself and the fact that as a person you must have your own foundation that you are basing your life on so that when everything else does not go right, you must go back to that centre where you are going to find yourself; go back to your foundation because once you build a strong foundation for yourself nothing that comes will ever shake you to really collapse but you shall all the time rise, despite the challenges that are confronting you.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Well your achievement especially in this period of her birthday month and birthday day is a wonderful way of being able to honour her.</p>
MS LOSI	<p>Yes indeed.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Can you tell us a little bit more about some of the pivotal moments in your life growing up?</p>
MS LOSI	<p>Well as I grew up, you know, for me it was the experiences that I had growing up in a family that was involved in politics and that led me to not necessarily enjoy.....that I could not enjoy my days of being a young person because I got to be introduced into the politics right at the age of ten and that has been one of the areas of my life where I think at times as much as one would have looked back earlier than now and said I wish I could have been like other kids, to be able to play around and not having to worry about a police invasion in your home, but today when I look at.....I feel it is what led me to be where I am today and also for me it is the issue of how women have...particularly women that I've lived with, how they have managed to go through many difficult areas in their lives but they emerged every time successfully and without men in her life, men came and left for different reasons, but those women have remained to keep their families and their children still intact. So I've learnt a lot from such and those are very, very critical moments in my life that I really cherish.</p>

DR. MALKA	And what would you say had the biggest impact on you to become the person you are today? You mentioned growing up in a political family, you've mentioned the induction into politics at the young age of ten years old; what other impacts have there been?
MS LOSI	<p>I think one of the issues is what one has had to go through in my work life, even before I really came into the Trade Union politics, when I started working in the South African National Defence Force just after 1994, what I had to deal with regards to racism in the workplace where I was stationed in Bloemfontein in the Free State, I had to deal with racism where white men believed that the new democratic dispensation is not for them and it is for us and that President Nelson Mandela is not their president but beyond that, it is how they treated me at the time because I was the only female person, African, in that department, so I was really given an attitude where I had to feel that I did not belong in that office that was male dominated as I was the only female and African at that time and when I dealt with issues when I had my first baby and I had to bring...I requested to bring my child to Bloemfontein because home is Port Elizabeth after I had given birth and having gone through all those processes and it was agreed that indeed I can bring my daughter and when I got my child and I was standing for inspection, as I would do six o'clock in the morning, we stand for inspection in the military base and when the sergeant of the base came and saw my child he pretended to be a loving person toward the kid but later I was given an instruction that I only have a week to see to it that my child has gone back to my parents home in Port Elizabeth and also some of those that complained, they said if her child can come and live with her in the military base then it's equal for us that we can also bring our dog to come and live with us in the military base. So that made me understand that if here, in this country, as a woman, you don't stand up for your own rights no-one will, so it has kept me going because as much as I had to comply because I was in the military and with politics are not allowed in the military particularly at that time when there was not even a trade union, so I had to comply with the order of returning my child back home but I had to live with the issue of being discriminated, not only based on gender but only based on my race because I was a black woman having given birth to a child, a single parent that was not allowed to be able to bond with her baby. So those were the very close experiences for me that had led me to continue to endure and persevere and I think it was also one of the building blocks of my character that has led me to be where I am today.</p>
DR. MALKA	Ms Losi, now in closing the conversation today, could you please share a few words of inspiration or wisdom that you'd like to pass onto other women in Africa that are listening to us?
MS LOSI	<p>I would like to say to women in Africa that never allow people to tell you what you can and you cannot do. Never allow other people to set limits for you. When you begin to understand yourself you will begin to appreciate the strength that you have within yourself. The only thing that you need to do is to tap into that ability, is to tap into that strength, build on it, ensure that whatever goals that you have for yourself, nothing is impossible and you shall achieve. Be focused, never let anyone to tell you that you can't and I always say even if you are in a marriage and you are a woman leader, do not let that marriage define what you can and you cannot do, you would regret tomorrow and say I have wasted my time here had I remained in the marriage but also you know continued to explore the potential that I have and what I love doing, you would not have been frustrated when the other part of your life does not work out. So because the reason why I'm raising</p>

	<p>this regarding marriage, it is because in our culture as African women we are always told that we must be submissive, we must give all but receive less. We are told that we can only be good women when we really give everything to our partners and our in-laws and they take everything at times, not all of them, and they leave us only with scars that reflect at times what we have lived and we normally take those scars, depending how strong you areto continue andthat it is who we are, it defines who we are. Let's embrace those scars because they can only tell the journey that we have travelled and if we embrace those we will be able to say they reflect the warrior that I am because no warrior will go to war and come back not scarred, so let us embrace those scars that we have, be it physical, be it emotional, but let's make the most of it because every woman has a potential to succeed. We must just work together, be united because there is more that can unite us as women than what can divide us.</p>
DR. MALKA	Thank you for that powerful message, so inspiring and so real. It's been a pleasure having you on our show today.
MS LOSI	Thank you very much for having me.
DR. MALKA	We wish you all the very, very best in your current appointment and role as President of COSATU and look forward to featuring you on our programme again once you've managed to get into the role and start embracing it
MS LOSI	Thank you very much it will be a pleasure for me.
	PROGRAMME END