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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: THOKO DIDIZA – MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE LAND REFORM AND RURAL 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 in our Johannesburg studio today is South Africa's Minister of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development; Thoko Didiza. Minister Didiza previously served as Minister for Public Works of the Republic of South Africa from 2006 through to 2008; she was Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs from 1999 until 2006; served as Deputy Minister of Agriculture from 1994 until 1999; she's a member of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress. Welcome to the show Minister!
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	Thank you very much, good morning to your listeners too.
DR. MALKA	It's such a pleasure to have you back on and joining us. When we first met you were House Chair of National Assembly of Parliament, so I must say...
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...congratulations on your ministerial appointment and I also think it's so important to reflect that you were part of the country's very first cabinet in 1994, serving in the Portfolio of Agriculture as Deputy Minister....
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...and now 25 years later, you are Minister of the department.
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	Well, actually it was after 5 years that I became full minister of Agriculture of Agriculture and Land Affairs at that time; from 1999 until 2004; 2004 until 2006.
DR. MALKA	How have you found, being in the department 25 years ago, how things have transformed a quarter of a century later?
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	I must say that for me agriculture is a very interesting space because it changes every day. You will wake up today, there's something else; you've got a drought, you have to deal with it; one part of the country has got a flood, you have got to deal with it but it's all in the space of agriculture. One day you have got some hail, it destroys everything; animal diseases, like we are dealing with a foot and mouth outbreak in one of the farms in Limpopo. Not long ago we were dealing with African Swine Fever in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West, so it's an exciting space. Yes, there has been changes because as you know in 1999 the Department of Agriculture was actually merged with the fisheries as well as forestry and now again it's going back to what it was in '99 even though with added responsibility of rural development, which is Land and Rural Development. So, it's not a....
DR. MALKA	...it's dynamic....
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...it's dynamic and there are changes because people go, other people come into this space, they add some of their, you know, focus areas that within policy, yes, but sometimes certain emphasis which also we have to appreciate and see how you manage as the newcomer in this space and having been for 5 years in the legislature where you were looking at parliamentarians,

	<p>holding ministers to account, now I'm on the other side, I'm a member of the Executives so it's also about how you manage those relationships with the hindsight of knowledge; how the legislative space works. But for me, interesting thing about this portfolio, is that I'm not in the office most of the time, I'm in the field and interact with people; farmers, communities and you know with the nature of our agricultural system in South Africa, so on one hand we are with local women who are operating at a subsistence level, you move to...your new interest into commercialisation; black farmers who are actually taking new opportunities in terms of the markets and the other value chains in agriculture and you go to the established farmers who have been in this space for longer, which therefore means on one hand we have to look at support mechanisms that you need for all those various constituencies, which are varying and sometimes are the same. Issues of technology transfer are issues that would affect or are required by small farmers as they are required by established farmers. Issues of finance, that's the same. Market information and market facilitation and market access would actually span the entire value chain in terms of your constituency, but for me, one of the interesting things is maybe in this term of this office, how do I enable rural communities, particularly women, to appreciate the value and the assets that they hold and how they can turn those into, you know, monetary value, you know, there is no household in African communities, and it's not just in South Africa, where women or a household doesn't have a goat or a sheep. It might look as small ruminants, but, if you look at the value chain of the goat industry for instance, rearing a goat, looking after it, depending on the type of hair you can get mohair out of it, you can also get meat....</p>
DR. MALKA	...cheese...
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...cheese....
DR. MALKA	...so, it becomes a....
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...you know....
DR. MALKA	...sustainable source of not just sustenance but also income.
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	<p>Precisely, but also, I always say with a goat you can actually use the skin as well, you know, for your cushions and baby shoes, you know, because its very soft, but also, you can do other crafting, the bags and something else. So, I always say agriculture is actually a facilitator of industry, but most of the time when people talk about agriculture they think about food, even though they forget sometimes they think food comes from the retail, it doesn't come from...</p>
DR. MALKA	...from the shop....
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	<p>...farmers, but people hardly realise the interlinkages in the economic value chain, you know, that emanates from agriculture, so when people calculate agriculture's contribution in the GDP, most of the time they look at primary agriculture; what we actually produce out of the land, they don't look at beyond the farm gate; what happens to those goods. For instance, if you talk about sugar, you know, out of the farmgate, from cane in production you then go to processing, you then have sugar, you can even have ethanol, you know, you can also have biofuels out of sugar which is your energy source for your automotive industry. You can also use molasses and other things and that's just, you know, when people look at sugar's contribution they would look largely at cane and maybe your first or second refinery and when you talk of poultry, people think about ja, chicken, meat, which is important, but they don't look at it is an export value...</p>

DR. MALKA	...feathers....
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...that you can actually access other markets. If you look now, chicken has become a very important commodity because people with different choices as they become more conscious of their health, they would use, you know, white meat, which is your breast and that's where the competition comes in but there are still those who love their thighs and leg quarters, which is called brown meat. So for me, if I'm engaging with the farmers, part of the dialogue is; let's look at how we actually sell chicken, instead of a full fowl as we are used to, but start to understand what do other markets need, they may not need your full chicken but they may want your leg quarters, so, you start to look at chicken in a broader, you know, scope than you were. So that's the whole industry; you look at cotton, men's shirts, your dresses, in the textile industry. So, a relationship with people with their, you know, their goods, particularly clothing, it's oh ja from a shop or from a factory, but where it begins it's on the land where you produce cotton.
DR. MALKA	So, a lot of your work is about looking at the primary sourcing of those commodities in their raw state that then enter into different sectors of industry and are almost diversifications or spin-offs of agriculture; talking about apparel, talking about the energy sector. So, it's a very important starting point and making people think differently, that it's not just about producing the food, but it's about....
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...yes....
DR. MALKA	...expanding their own value chain.
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	Precisely and one of the interesting things about the work that the President, President Ramaphosa, had actually, you know, inculcated in this new administration, it's how we must, as ministries, work together so that, you know, those linkages don't happen, you know, like I've done my bit so it's your bit, but it's how do we collectively converse and understand the relationship between these sectors that support various commodities in the market. Like what we have been doing with Minister Patel, it's looking at the poultry industry and what we did, which it's what we announced on the 6 th at the beginning of the Investment Conference when we signed the Poultry Master Plan, we brought in producers, we brought in the importers and exporters of chicken, we brought in your small-scale farmers who are part of the contract farming business with your bigger players, we brought in your independent farmers who are producing on their own in the same room and then we brought in the government and government DFI's, because if you look at this industry, one of the important things, which is not in the industry space, but it's a regulatory issue from government, it's the sanitary and phytosanitary, which is the health, you know, status of the food that people eat. So when somebody looks at a vet...veterinary doctor or animal husbandry or an animal health technician, they just think oh that one is responsible for, you know, cats and dogs and animals and they look at it more on the inoculation side, ja you know, they inject...
DR. MALKA	...and domestically...
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...they don't look at veterinary animal health scientists, plant scientists, as actually your gateway to export, because from an international trade point of view, if one can't certify the food that comes in cannot be able to trace back where this comes from, if you end up with a case of someone getting sick with salmonella for instance, you need to be able to trace immediately was this chicken from this country or that country and you can be able to talk to the vets that side so that you can say package so and so that came

	from your country, we've picked up Salmonella, and they can be able to go back to source in that farm and deal with the disease.
DR. MALKA	And speaking about the international trade dynamic, as much as we are an independent country, we are all globally connected...
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...precisely....
DR. MALKA	...and recently you were elected as chairperson of the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment and part of the actions of this committee, I understand, are about attaining food and nutrition security, reducing poverty, boosting Inter-African trade and enhancing resilience to climate change; could you tell us a little bit more about that role because it seems incredibly important on interlinking?
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	It is and I must say it's an honour that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Ministers of Agriculture, Water and Environment actually recommended South Africa to take the lead and myself in particular as the Chair of the Bureau. The Specialised Technical Committee of Ministries, if you look at the Constitutional Act of the African Union, they are actually the organs of the AU. For some time we have kind of, let me say organically, operated through sectoral ministries without any integration, so there was a decision that was taken by the heads of state in government in 2009, emphasised again in 2014, that we need to actually re-configure these organs in the way in which they were envisaged in the constitutive act. So, one of the things that have been pulling ministers of water and pulling the teams that are dealing with environment, pulling together those that are dealing with rural development and agricultural fisheries in the main...in a number of countries that are actually one ministry and then the ones that deal with meteorology. So, in that configuration it's how do you as the chairperson enable the functioning of these other sectors in undertaking their work, consolidating their positions as African, you know, ministers particularly on the issues of climate change, but the other reality is how do we utilise the expertise and experience that lie across these various sectoral organs to actually support the various industries. Agriculture for one; we need to deal with climate issues and develop adaptation mechanisms, so, there has to be a working relationship between environmental ministers and agriculture to actually say how do we deal with this changing environment. Bring in issues of agricultural research because, you know, you need to develop new seed varieties that can be drought resistant, but also, how you deal with other new strains of diseases that may come as a result of the shifts in the climate that may bring in new diseases that we have never encountered, for the role of technology in adaptation, in my view, it's one that is going to be critical. There is a technical committee of experts below the ministerial which would really work to coordinate with the various sectors and the various member countries but also identifying what are the strengths that are there in the continent. For instance, you have got a lot of centres of excellence on fisheries that look at surveillance in the oceans but also aquaculture, you know, as part of your nutrition. You also have got a lot of expertise in areas of natural resource management as well as your management of the wildlife, so this expertise it's how can we, as countries collaborate, also share.
DR. MALKA	Minister, we've spoken a lot about the agriculture sector and to be honest I had no idea on the diversity and how it impacts on so many different aspects of our lives; I'd like to turn more towards aspects of land. We know that security and ownership of land are really important from a social and economic perspective and although constitutionally women have got equal rights to men, we know that

	<p>when it comes to land ownership, given historical patterns, given customary law, particularly in agriculture and rural settings where quite often women are working the land, but the proportion of female landowners to men is significantly lower; what are your views here and are there any types of interventions on trying to shift ownership into more women's hands?</p>
<p>MIN THOKO DIDIZA</p>	<p>Well, you know, for me the debate on land is a very critical one but I always say we need to look at issues of land from the position of ownership, access and use, because that for me is critical and I think the majority of issues will border between these three areas and all of them are important and if you look at women's access to land, as you have said, in the majority, doesn't matter which region of the world you are in, it may not be custom, it may be culture that women's relationship to land has always been through their male...either male relatives or partners. If you look in a number of communities girl children are never thought of in terms of inheritance in their families land because they are thought of to be married to somebody, so it's like your share of land access at your husband's place and which is an immediate disadvantage for women, but also, if it happens that you don't have a husband, you end up not getting married, even from the household and the homestead and the village where you stay, allocation to land for women in order to access it for use, they would ask you to come with your uncle, if you've got no uncle, your brother; if you've got no brother, your father, but it's a male and that is one of the shifts, in my view, that we have to make as a deliberate choice. One of the things the African Union Specialised Technical Committee has said is that we need to make sure that countries increase tenure security for women in terms of land ownership and land use and access because it has been proven that, you know, when women work the land they don't only derive food for their families but they can actually sell it to subsidise the income but also participate in the local economy. So, there is definite value for me on how our policies as different member countries should be deliberate on how we ensure that we enable women to access land. In our country for instance, we've got targets, where we say in any land reform programme, be it redistribution or restitution, we want to see the percentage, you know, going for women directly, even though for restitution it may be difficult, because where you have got large scale of land that gets transferred back to communities, it's community owned, which is a mix of women and in large measure they use it collectively. But where we use our proactive acquisition strategy as a state, we want to actually make sure that at least 30%, it could be more, must go to women, but you know policies sometimes can be said to be gender neutral, but I always say you need to target within that neutrality. So, if you were to say 30% of women must access land in this financial year; how do you draw them and I always look at Kenya in the electoral system, one of the things to improve women participation in the legislature, they actually had to designate certain constituencies, that in these constituencies it would only be women. So even if there's competition, that it will be women, no men will enter that constituency, so it was a way of actually looking at specific mechanisms that is going to draw women and for me, one of the things I was speaking to my officials is with all these nice policy of targeting but we need to then say; in this budget of this financial year, so many hectares and this is how we are going to make sure that in your budget of the province, you know, in our district offices, out of the portfolio that we are having we would like 15% of those to go to women, so that women can apply knowing that there is definitely going to be a possibility for them to succeed.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>We're talking on the theme of quotas and some people disagree with quotas, but when I look at aspects whether it's from a redistribution point of view of land or</p>

	<p>even political structures or looking towards compositions within the private sector. Our programme, 'Womanity – Women in Unity' is all about gender equality which is becoming more and more of a global focus and gender quotas sometimes seem to be controversial but when I've spoken to some of your colleagues, like the likes of Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, as well as others, they argue that it's necessary in order to promote equality and then increase the role and the number of women in decision making capacity.</p>
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	<p>I actually agree with them because for me you shouldn't isolate quotas, you know, out of a myriad of other, you know, instruments that you use, it's part of your instruments that you could use at a particular given time. You know, you can say gender equality and I will again come back to South Africa as an example. We decided, you know, during the negotiations that the equality clause was going to be in the constitution. You would argue that, okay, if citizens know that this is a constitutional obligation they will act in tandem; but they never did.</p>
DR. MALKA	No.
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	<p>So, you will have to actually mobilise, advocate, but that on its own can't achieve what you want. One of the things that have this move, even in the political structure within the ANC, I always remind people that when ANC came back, you know, was unbanned in the country and they had to now start to mobilise the first conference in 1991 in Durban, where the ANC held it's first conference inside the country after so many years of being in exile, women pushed for 30% representation of women in the leadership structures. We never got it. We were ridiculed about, you know, sometimes when you pass as a woman, they will say 30%, you know, in jest, but....</p>
DR. MALKA	...it's a power phenomenon...
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...power phenomenon....
DR. MALKA	...no-one wants to give it up....
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	<p>...so, one of the things that we had to, you know, continuously ensure that we deal with this issue internally in the ANC, arguing the point why you require to ensure that women come into the spaces of leadership, not just to...as cosmetics but because the value that they bring. It was only, if I recall very well, in the 2007 ANC Congress that the...</p>
DR. MALKA	...so that's 16 years later....
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	<p>...that's where the 50/50 percent was finally accepted in the ANC and we started with local government to make sure that we can actually test, but we also moved further to say the Zebra Strategy so that when even nominations for those who go to hold public office, if the first is a woman, the second is a man, you know, in a Zebra stripe, even though we also acknowledge that maybe you must have a percentage where there could be the direct election which is like your 25% but some of those strategies, inevitably, have been very educational in our society and as the ANC came with more women in parliament, in the first parliament in 1994, other parties had few women but I think it acted as a pressure. If you look at South Africa's parliament today; very different than, what it was in the past, you don't only just have women but you also got have young women, you know, who are playing a very critical role in terms of public policy, legislation...and for me you wouldn't have assumed that had we just left that equality clause and not do anything but you also had to look at what are the institutional mechanisms. We started with the gender machinery; apart from the Gender Commission, we actually argued for the status of women to be at the Presidency because of the office that the president holds and the authority that it has, we thought at the time it was very critical to ensure that you locate that office there so</p>

	that it can look at how ministers respond in terms of their, you know, public service appointments, board appointments, but also programmatic interventions in terms, you know, in respect of women. So, for me, you can't isolate quotas as though they don't have a space in promoting gender equality, they do, because gradually, you know, they help you to reach that ultimate objective of gender equality. Some major democracies still haven't achieved that equality, even here ourselves though you can say at the political front we have moved far and we are much better, but in the corporate it's still the same. Who do you see, I mean who were at the Investment Conference; the optics didn't look good, you look at the people who were pledging...
DR. MALKA	...you were there...
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...I was there...
DR. MALKA	...what did you see?
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	I mean, the faces you saw of people who were coming up on stage to pledge, it was male. When we were signing the Poultry Master Plan, we were three women, it was myself, but from the industry there were only two, but the rest were men and I think that tells you the journey that we still have to travel. It's also about changing the consciousness both of women and men because I always argue that women have a better position to help us reach a gender neutral and equal society because we nurture children as they grow up. It was very interesting how my mother raised us and I don't know why she did that, but she always argued that all of you are equally important. My sister is the first born, so she said you've got your place, one son, you know, apple of my eye, the last born, the one that's always you know loved, so all of you have equal space and I will give you equal attention but you also do the same. My brother can cook, can wash dishes, can clean the house, can look after children, I mean when I got my firstborn, a girl, my brother would visit his friends having my daughter on his back, he didn't see it as, you know, demeaning him. Even when he married, when his wife comes back from confinement, even when you know, paternity leave was not legislated, he actually spent time to look after the kids and help you know so that the wife can have time to rest, to nurture the younger one, but the others also get attention, but for me it is that socialisation that we need to talk about. How do we start to build a new citizenry that respect, that value the roles that each one of us play in society?
DR. MALKA	Minister that distribution of what were previously considered as gender specific roles is really important. Now I'd like to turn more towards a personal reflection on you. We really, you know, in our conversations one of the questions I ask all my guests who have made tremendous achievements in their various spheres of work is about what they consider to be some of the factors that have contributed towards their success.
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	Wow, can there be one?
DR. MALKA	There is never one.
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	I don't think so.
DR. MALKA	There's never one.
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	I always say you know your family it's your first, you know, point of support or strength as a pillar in what you do because if they understand and they appreciate the role that you play, you don't have hang-ups of how are they feeling when I am out, you know, for work and for me that had been very interesting because even from when I was very young, I grew up with my

	<p>mum and dad who were both teachers, so they were working. I remember that I got into school when I was four, I'll say by mistake because I was following them and one teacher just finally said from grade one that okay, let me take this child and they thought I was just going to play for the whole day. I never played, I became serious and they now had a problem that I passed; what do they do with me but I'm just saying that I grew up in a family that was working but also even when I visited my grandmother in Swaziland because my mum is Swazi, she was a very entrepreneurial lady, she was a smallholder so she was always busy, if not out to the dip tanks with the cattle or to the fields, so there was never like an environment that, you know, was not I would say....</p>
DR. MALKA	...nurturing...
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	<p>...nurturing, but within that, my grandmother, my parents always found time to actually give support, listen, appreciate what we are doing, both at school but also generally in terms of your day, what are you doing and I think for me that has been the strength but also the extended family; the community, because for me, I was socialisation, you know, you are never a child of your own family, you are part of the community so the encouragement, sometimes the criticisms that you know will be brought about, not in a negative way but in a way that helps you...</p>
DR. MALKA	...constructive...
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	<p>...to improve on what you're doing, like my mum would sometimes say what were you saying, you know, maybe if she saw me on TV and I said this is what I was saying but the time was not enough, she said but the limited time you have, say something that somebody can discern and understand. So okay, so I appreciate one time when I was still a deputy minister, very young, so I came back and shared my frustration with her that, you know, I came into this farmers meeting and one old man was like we have been waiting, where is this minister, so when the old lady said no, there's the minister he said hmmm, Mandela has been in prison for a long time, really, this child is a minister, what does she know about farming? So, I was expressing the frustration, so my mum says mmm I understand but remember that not just in our African community, even among the Afrikaner community, there had never been a young person...</p>
DR. MALKA	...and a woman...
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	<p>...and a woman in government, let alone the portfolio that is predominantly male in terms of ownership, though the majority of people who work the land are women, so, excuse the old man but let me give you a tip. So, I said what is it? She says next time, when you go to these meetings, particularly in the rural communities, just wear longish dresses and put a turban on your head and it gives you a lift as if you are a little older. I mean, you could...I laughed at it because it sounded funny, but I tried it and it worked. So, I am saying it is those things and sometimes you meet a member of the community and they say hey, you, what are you doing about one, two, three? So, you have to give time, stand and say ma, what is the problem? No, you know we applied for land and so many years has passed...so you have to explain the processes because that member of the community will share with others for them to appreciate what are the complexities on something that they might have taken for granted and thought is easy. I've also had a very dynamic relationship in the party, you know, because part of your political life, you know, it's how you engage with those that you work with and being able to share knowledge and engage on the debates but also doing community work has actually helped one to be conscious about the struggles that people face, continue to face, even in the democratic space. You know sometimes we</p>

	<p>make a mistake to say because we've attained political leadership, democratisation in that sense, is that everything is hunky-dory, nice. It's not, I mean people are still grappling with things that are, maybe in your eyes may be mundane, but making a living, enabling them to just make ends meet. So it's about that sensitivity of how you take those struggles of people into policy making, into legislation, into programmatic interventions that would actually help to solve that condition of those communities, because if there are conditions are solved, if poverty is reduced, then more people can contribute, you know, effectively in economy, but also, livelihoods, people will be much more better and they can be able to sustain themselves, you will reduce the public expenditure on your grants because now people can do things on their own.</p>
DR. MALKA	And it has this ripple effect and contribution effect on...because we constantly hear that our triple challenges is poverty....,
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...underdevelopment...
DR. MALKA	...inequality....
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...inequality....
DR. MALKA	...unemployment and all of that and I it's...I think it's been a theme of our conversation, everything is interlinked, nothing is...
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	...precisely....
DR. MALKA	...isolated. Minister we are unfortunately running out of time, so if I can ask you, in closing our conversation today if you could please share a few words of wisdom or inspiration to our young ladies or older women listening to the show today?
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	Well what I can say is it's important to appreciate that we are who we are because of those who have come before us and how do you leave the mark and have an impact on the things that you do on a daily basis on the lives of others.
DR. MALKA	Thank you very much, that's a very poignant point and practical advice.
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	Thank you.
DR. MALKA	It's been a pleasure having you on our show again and we really welcome and look forward to hearing how the programme progresses.
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	Thank you very much, I'm sure we will have another timely time to assess how far we have gone but also it would be very interesting for me to look at how the implementation of the Africa Free Trade area would actually benefit women.
DR. MALKA	Yes and in fact we had a conversation with our Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry and we were talking exactly that point, so, we will see how all of these elements come together.
MIN THOKO DIDIZA	Come together.
DR. MALKA	PROGRAMME END