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**“Mainstreaming Gender”
National Machinery for Women in South Africa
*A Policy Outline***

by

Catherine Albertyn

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A POLICY OUTLINE

1 *Introduction*

The question of what structures and mechanisms to put in place for the advancement of women in a democratic South Africa has been debated within the women's movement and democratic organisations for some years. Initially the discussion focused on the pros and cons of a Women's Ministry. However, at a conference convened on the subject as early as December 1992¹, agreement emerged on the concept of an integrated "package" of structures and mechanisms at all levels of government and

¹ Convened by a group of Durban based feminists and funded by IDASA at the University of Natal, Durban, December 1992.

within civil society.² A further conference organised by the Women's National Coalition saw international experts share the experience of countries as diverse as Canada, Thailand, the Netherlands and Bangladesh.³ This conference reiterated the "package" concept and made some recommendations about structures.⁴ At an ANC policy conference in December 1993, the issue was again discussed and the then future governing party (within the Government of National Unity) adopted various recommendations about the kind of gender structures that should be

² From a paper delivered by the writer entitled "Women and Politics - Choices in Structural Mechanisms to Empower Women in a Democratic Government". Unpublished conference paper, Centre for Applied Legal Studies, December 1992.

³ "Ensuring Gender Equality in the New South Africa", convened by the Women's National Coalition and Lawyers for Civil Rights under Law, USA in Johannesburg, 7-9 May 1993.

⁴ For example, the notion of a Women's Ministry was rejected in favour of a co-ordinated set of gender desks in government departments. See the report of the conference, Women's National Coalition, 1993.

instituted within the new government.⁵

Despite the widespread consensus on the need for National Machinery and the nature of its structures, little has been done by the Government of National Unity to establish this Machinery. At a conference arranged by the Constitutional Assembly on 3 and 4 June 1995 as part of its public participation programme, representatives from 74 organisations called for a discussion document on National Machinery to be developed and circulated. This was done⁶ and a document written by the author was circulated by the Gender Unit of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). It has also been forwarded to various ministries. This paper is an expanded version of that discussion document. It is being circulated by the Centre for Applied Legal Studies to widen the debate on the issue within civil society and

⁵ See the report of a conference convened by the ANC Emancipation Commission, December 1993.

⁶ "National Machinery for Women in South Africa. A Policy Outline for Discussion". C. Albertyn. Gender Research Project, Centre for Applied Legal Studies. July 1995.

to provide information to organisations to use in lobbying government for the immediate implementation of National Machinery.

2 *Why do we need National Machinery for Women?*

Women are an unequal and disadvantaged group in South Africa. This inequality and disadvantage is further compounded by variables such as race, class and geographic location. Gender inequality is systemic and entrenched in the structures, norms and values of the state and civil society. It is pervasive, but it is also often hidden, complex and insidious. The emancipation of women and the attainment of equality in the political, civil, economic, social and cultural spheres is, we know, a long-term process of social transformation that fundamentally challenges the way in which society is organised. At the level of the state it requires a new approach to the formulation and implementation of policy. Decision-makers need to develop new ways of thinking about the world, bureaucrats need to understand these in implementing policies, programmes and laws, and parliaments need to translate this new thinking into law. At the

level of civil society, women and men need to educate themselves and each other about the causes and manifestations of, and the solutions to, gender inequality and patriarchy.

In other words, the shift from inequality to equality requires a transformation of government and civil society. National Machinery exists to do this. Inter alia, it seeks to develop an overall policy vision; work to reorient existing policies and create new ones; promote the enactment of laws that will benefit women; monitor progress; and assist in providing avenues of redress.

In so far as National Machinery seeks to promote the equality of women and men it becomes an important mechanism in meeting South Africa's constitutional and international commitments to gender equality, women's human rights and social justice. These are fundamental principles of our constitution⁷ and of various international documents to which the South African Government is a

⁷ See Albertyn and Kentridge "Introducing the Right to Equality" **South African Journal on Human Rights** 149 at 149-150.

signatory.⁸

2.1 *What is National Machinery for Women?*

National Machinery for the advancement of women refers to a set of co-ordinated structures, within and outside of government, which aim to achieve equality for women as participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries in the political, civil, social, economic and cultural spheres of life.

The international importance placed on these structures is reflected in the Nairobi 1985 Forward-Looking Strategies. These require the following:

"Appropriate government machinery for monitoring and improving the status of women should be established where it is lacking. To be effective, this

⁸ For example, the Declaration and Platform of Action of the World Summit on Social development held in Copenhagen (March 1995) and the Platform of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (August 1995).

machinery should be established at the highest level of government and should be ensured adequate resources, commitment and authority to advise on the impact on women of all government policies. Such machinery can play a vital role in enhancing the status of women, *inter alia*, through the dissemination of information to women on their rights and entitlements, through collaborative action with various ministries and other government agencies, and with nongovernmental organisations and indigenous women's societies and groups".⁹

More recently, the Platform of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing imposes the following obligation on government:

"Based on a strong political commitment, create a national machinery, where it does not exist...for

⁹ Paragraph 57 of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, 1985.

the advancement of women at the highest level of government; it should have clearly defined mandates and authority; critical elements would be adequate resources and the ability and competence to influence policy and formulate and review legislation. Among other things, it should perform policy analysis, undertake advocacy, communication, coordination and monitoring of implementation".¹⁰

The major task of these structures of National Machinery is to transform the institutions, policies, procedures, consultative processes, budgetary allocations and priorities of government to take account of the needs and aspirations of women. This is typically achieved by the development of a National Gender Policy and the implementation of this policy at all levels of government and in civil society.

Most importantly, this Policy should aim to integrate gender into all government

¹⁰ Paragraph 205(b) of the Platform of Action.

policy, planning and activities. It should result in the transformation of government to treat (and meet) the needs of women and men with equal concern and respect. It should not result in the establishment of a separate bureaucracy concerned with the needs of women. As such, National Machinery has similar goals to those of the RDP, namely, the transformation of all the institutions, processes and priorities of government.

3 *The development and implementation of a National Gender Policy*

At the centre of the effective working of National Machinery is the development of a national policy for the advancement of gender equality. The focus on gender rather than women may be explained as follows:

3.1 The emphasis on gender rather than women recognises that the inequality of women cannot be understood by looking at women alone, but must be based on a fuller

understanding of the relationship between men and women in society. It recognises that because men and women occupy different, and often unequal, positions in society, they have different needs, responsibilities and opportunities.

3.2 These different needs and responsibilities arise out of the unequal division of labour between women and men which is based on gender, societal attitudes and power relations. The most obvious inequalities refer to women's greater burden in respect of their productive (domestic work) and reproductive (childcare) roles.

3.3 Policies, plans and projects must address the different and unequal needs, responsibilities and opportunities created by this unequal division of labour if they aim to promote gender equality and empower women. In particular, they need to recognise that

- * these needs may be largely specific to women because of the particular combination of biology

(bearing children) and female gender roles (raising and caring for children) which means that women are predominantly responsible for children. Therefore, policies which promote the provision of adequate clinics and crèches for children would help to ease the greater burden that women carry in respect of children.

* although it may appear that women and men have common needs such as the provision of clean water, energy sources, sanitation, healthcare and housing; women's gender roles and position in society mean that women:

* experience greater hardship where these needs are not met, and

* experience different obstacles to the attainment of these needs.

Both of these issues must be considered in ensuring that women and men enjoy equal access to, and benefits of, the

provision of these basic needs.

3.4 Government policy and programmes should therefore be based on an analysis of the gender division of labour and women's interrelated productive, reproductive and community-management and decision-making roles as well as the effects that these have on women's access to resources and benefits.

3.5 At the same time, to meet the goal of substantive equality, policy should not only aim to address women's immediate and practical gender needs; it should also seek to meet strategic gender needs, namely, the transformation of the oppressive gender roles in our society. For example, policies and laws aimed at addressing childcare responsibilities for working women should be available to women and men. Thus parental rather than **maternity** leave should be available to all employees to care for sick children.

In broad terms, the development and

implementation of a **National Gender Policy** requires

- * a new approach to the formulation and implementation of policy and planning;
- * a new method of economic planning and allocation;
- * the establishment of effective systems of evaluation and monitoring; and
- * the involvement of civil society and particularly, women's organisations at national, provincial and local levels.

4 ***A Model for National Machinery in South Africa - building on the current consensus:***

The model for National Machinery in South Africa discussed in this document is based on the research of the writer, as well as a general consensus amongst women and women's organisations derived from many years of discussions, conferences and workshops on the issue. The main themes of this consensus include the following:

4.1 National Machinery should be made up of an integrated "Package" of the following structures located at

various levels of the state and civil society.

4.1.1 A co-ordinating structure (Office on the Status of Women) located in the President's Office.

4.1.2 A cabinet committee on gender.

4.1.3 The establishment of Gender desks/units in various government departments.

4.1.4 An independent research and advisory council, such as a Commission for Gender Equality.

4.1.5 A multi-party Women's Parliamentary Caucus.

4.1.6 The establishment of, and linkages to, structures at provincial and local level.

4.2 National Machinery should operate to integrate or mainstream gender in all policy formulation and implementation, law reform, administrative practices and public and private institutions.

4.3 The structures of National

Machinery should not operate as a "dumping ground" for those gender issues which should be the concern of other structures, such as the Human Rights Commission. In this respect, there is concern over the current draft bill of the Commission for Gender Equality.¹¹

4.4 Priority should be given to the development and involvement of women's organisations within civil society. Although Government cannot take responsibility for this, it can facilitate the creation of an enabling environment for NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs).¹² Moreover, the structures of National Machinery should seek to include NGO's

11 See the forthcoming critique of the draft bill on the Commission for Gender Equality available from the Gender Research Project, Centre for Applied Legal Studies in January 1996.

12 See "Civil Society and Fundamental Freedoms" by N. Haysom, F Cachalia and E. Molahlehi. Published by the Development Resources Centre as a report commissioned by the Independent Study into an Enabling Environment for NGOs, July 1993.

and CBO's in the performance of their functions. Not only should policy be developed in a manner which is participatory, contributory and consultative, but NGOs could assist in a range of functions of National Machinery such as training, evaluation, developing gender methodologies, conducting research etc.

5 ***A Model for National Machinery : Structures in the Executive:***

Executive structures form the nucleus of National Machinery, enabling it to influence the formulation and implementation of policy at all levels. Two structures are envisaged at executive level:

- * An Office on the Status of Women in the President's Office;
- * A Cabinet Committee on Gender.

The *Office on the Status of Women* is the structure which co-ordinates the structures and facilitates the activities of National Machinery in government, whereas the *cabinet committee* lends political authority to the policies and programmes of National Machinery.

5.1 *Office on the Status of Women:*

There is already political commitment to the Office on the Status of Women by Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki.¹³ However, no detailed policy has been published on the nature and functions of this Office.

The Office should be the co-ordinating structure and apex of the National Machinery. It should perform the following key functions:

- * the development and implementation of a National Gender Policy (based on the Women's Empowerment Programme currently being developed by the Gender Unit in the Reconstruction and Development Programme);

¹³ At a Pre-Beijing workshop held in July 1994, Deputy Minister, Thabo Mbeki, said that the creation of an Office on the Status of Women has been agreed to in principle by Cabinet and would soon be established. (C. Lowe Morna, *Beijing Agenda* no. 11 November 1995 at 7). This has not yet been established.

- * the development of a National Action Plan to implement the National Gender Policy;
- * the facilitation of all activities of the National Gender Policy and Action Plan, including:
 - * the integration of this National Gender Policy and Action Plan in all government departments;
 - * the reform of economic planning systems to take account of women's contributions and needs;
 - * the development of a comprehensive gender education and training strategy for government departments to develop skills in gender planning, policy development and implementation;
 - * the provision of ongoing support for Gender Desks and their staff;
 - * promoting co-operation and co-ordination within government and between

national and regional levels of government;

- * monitoring and evaluating, including the definition of key indicators against which all activities can be assessed;
- * the development and implementation of appropriate national legislation to enhance the status of women.

In playing a facilitative role, the Office would oversee the development of a "Gender Management System", namely, the system of Gender desks or units in the various ministries or government departments which are discussed below in section 7.

- * the development of a information system to assist in policy development, as well as the process of monitoring and evaluating within government and by organisations within civil society.

- * working with members of the legislature to promote a gender perspective in laws and policies and reporting on a regular basis to parliament.
- * encouraging and developing the active involvement of the public, private and voluntary sectors in civil society to work in partnership with government towards equality between women and men.

It is vital to recognise the limited and facilitative role of this Office. It is not responsible for the integration of gender in the work of all government departments; it is merely given the task of ensuring that each government department engages in its own process of transformation.

Structure

It has already been argued that the Office should not develop a large bureaucracy. Further considerations in developing a structure for the Office should take account of the need for (a)

political authority, (b) technical expertise and (c) consultative mechanisms.

a) *Political authority* is crucial for the Office to fulfil its functions across various government departments and to have access to the highest level of decision-making. This authority derives from its position in the President's Office and from the status of its head. Ideally the head of the Office should have ministerial status and appointment. This will allow direct access to other ministers and departments, as well as all to important budget measures and cabinet submissions.

b) As the office co-ordinating the National Machinery and the National Gender Policy and Action Plan, *technical expertise* is crucial. A senior public servant with the equivalent status of a director(-general) should be appointed to manage the office together with appropriately qualified staff.

c) The co-ordinating, facilitative and liaison functions of the Office requires

two kinds of *consultative mechanisms*:

- * departmental representation to enhance co-ordination with all the government departments; and
- * access for civil society: - to involve NGO's, independent research units, the media, the private sector and civil society in the work of the Office.

5.2 *Cabinet Committee on Gender:*

The cabinet is the supreme policy making body. All national policies, including the budget, are approved by cabinet before they are introduced to parliament or implemented by various government departments. For the Office on the Status of Women to obtain the highest level of political authority, as well as access to senior ministers and cabinet deliberations, it should be supported by a cabinet committee on gender. This committee should be made up of three or four key ministers whose task would be to work with the head of the Office on the Status of Women to

5.2.1 Ensure the adoption of the National Gender Policy and

Action Plan by the cabinet;

5.2.2 Assist in the effective functioning of the Office by ensuring the commitment of Ministers to this Policy;

5.2.3 Provide access to otherwise confidential cabinet deliberations and documents on policy, including documentation on budgetary measures; and

5.2.4 Support legislation and policy for acceptance by cabinet.

One of the major problems facing National Machinery in other countries has been its political marginalisation. This has allowed government departments to ignore, and even undermine, the objectives and methods of this Machinery in integrating gender into all levels of government. An effective cabinet committee can help to prevent this happening.

6 *Structures in Government Departments - Gender Desks (The Gender Management System):*

Government departments formulate policy, plan budgets, implement programmes and projects and deliver goods and services to the public. A primary goal of National Machinery is to ensure that gender concerns are integrated into all these aspects of departmental work. The Office on the Status of Women plays a co-ordinating role here, facilitating the establishment and functioning of Gender Desks in each department or ministry as part of a "Gender Management System" within Government. It is the task of those Desks to integrate gender into the operations and work of each department.

The functions of these Gender Desks include the following:

- * Reviewing departmental policy and planning in line with the National Gender Policy;
- * Ensuring that the implementation of the National Gender Policy becomes the task of whole department;
- * Developing appropriate strategies and

- methodologies to ensure the integration of gender in policy and planning;
- * Co-ordinating gender training and education within departments;
 - * Developing the necessary support mechanisms for the effective operation of the Gender Desks;
 - * Monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes; and
 - * Establishing mechanisms to liaise with civil society, and in particular, to facilitate sectoral organisation (eg. within health or education) and to utilise the skills and support provided by NGOs.

Given the problem of resources (human, technical and financial), the **structure** of these Desks may vary across departments. Where possible existing structures should be utilised after appropriate review and re-organisation. This process should be facilitated by the Office on the Status of Women and a designated person or team in the department.

The **personnel** of the Gender Desks should be specialists with necessary skills and profile. In setting up these units, it may be necessary to identify persons already in the department.

Care should be taken to ensure that there is room for career pathing and development of personnel outside of the Gender Desks.

The establishment of these Gender Desks does not have to wait for the setting up of an Office on the Status of Women. **Existing units and processes** that can be utilised immediately include the Interdepartmental Gender Forum set up by the RDP Gender Unit, the Public Service Training Unit; the programme of affirmative action in the public sector and the Gender Unit in the RDP.

6.1 The Interdepartmental Gender Forum

This is a forum established by the RDP Gender Unit in June 1995 to lay the foundation for the formal establishment of National Machinery in government departments. The Forum is considering issues relating to the transformation of government departments.

6.2 Public Service Training Unit

This could be utilised as a resource to offer gender training to all departments

in conjunction with skilled NGOs.

6.3 *Affirmative Action in the Public Sector*

To ensure that the environment of the Public Service affirms women as well as men, and that women are placed in decision-making position within the Public Service; the definition and implementation of affirmative action within the Public Sector must include gender.

6.4 *The Gender Unit in the RDP:*

The Gender Unit in the RDP was established to formulate a gender policy for the Government of National Unity and to ensure that the RDP has a positive impact on women. In other words, the task of the Unit has been (a) a national co-ordinating one (the formulation of a national policy) and (b) a departmental one (working to ensure the gender inclusiveness of the RDP). The Unit has also played a role (and envisages a role) in spearheading the development of National Machinery through the establishment of an

Interdepartmental Gender Forum.

As one of the few national gender structures in place, the RDP Gender Unit should continue to facilitate the establishment of National Machinery and carry out key functions of this Machinery such as the formulation of national policy. However, it will only be able to do this if it is given the resources to do so. With the establishment of an Office for the Status of Women and the development of the Gender Management System, the role of the RDP Gender Unit would be limited to that of a departmental Gender Desk, including the following functions:

- 6.4.1 Ensuring that the RDP programme is gender inclusive;**
- 6.4.2 Co-ordinating gender training and education of all RDP staff; and**
- 6.4.3 Extending and developing its strong ties (and those of the RDP) with women's organisations in civil society.**

7 *Independent advisory bodies : the Commission for Gender Equality*

The Commission for Gender Equality is provided for in the interim constitution. It should form an integral part of the National Machinery as an independent advisory, consultative and research body outside of government, but accountable to parliament in the sense that it would report to parliament annually on its activities.

The functions of the Commission for Gender Equality should include the following:

- * Advise and liaise with the Office on the Status of Women and Gender Management System in respect of the formulation, implementation, review and evaluation of the National Gender Policy and Action Plan;
- * Co-operate and liaise with women's organisations;
- * Independently monitor and evaluate the National Gender Policy and Government structures and actions to implement this Policy and other gender programmes;
- * Engage in and commission gender research;

- * Make recommendations for law reform;
- * Co-ordinate public education and training on gender issues;
- * Engage in advocacy and advocacy training; and
- * Publish public reports on its work.

The **structure** of the Commission should again take into account the shortage of resources (human, technical and financial). The Commission should be small with a high degree of technical expertise. Commissioners should generally be part-time, not part of the "grave train" (sitting fees only) and be made up of a combination of people who are representative of certain constituencies (eg. labour, rural women) as well as people who have particular skills relating to gender research, training etc. Staff should be suitably skilled and conduct the work of the Commission.

To fulfil its tasks, the Commission should consider developing the following Departments:

- Legal
- Research
- Planning

- Education and Training
- Public Liaison

The current draft bill on the Commission for Gender Equality does not reflect this view of the Commission. Rather, it appears to establish an institution that is remarkable similar to the Human Rights Commission with powers of investigation. This could lead to confusion of the roles of the two structures and increases the risk of the Commission for Gender Equality becoming a "dumping ground" for gender issues. The draft bill should be carefully considered before it goes to parliament next year.¹⁴

8 *Structures in the Legislature:*

Parliament is the place where laws are made. Structures and processes must be established which ensure that all laws are gender sensitive.

¹⁴ See further the critique of the draft bill by the Gender Research Project, Centre for Applied Legal Studies (forthcoming, January 1996).

8.1 *Parliamentary caucus:*

An organised and effective multi-party caucus should perform the following functions:

- * Allow women in parliament to unite on gender issues;
- * Provide a forum for education and capacity building of women members of parliament;
- * Provide a central point of access for advocacy by civil society; and
- * Provide a focal point for women parliamentarians to communicate with women's organisations in civil society.

8.2 *Select and other parliamentary committees:*

It is important to impact on parliamentary committees by means of lobbying and public representations for the following reasons:

8.2.1 Select committees play an important function in developing legislation and no longer merely act as a rubber stamp of government policy.

These committees now play role in policy formulation and in redrafting legislation. Some parliamentary committees may even develop or introduce legislation.

8.2.2 Parliamentary rules have opened these committees to the public and opened space for public participation. It is important that women's organisations participate in these committees.

9 *Institutions and structures that link into the Machinery*

The following institutions do not form part of the National Machinery, but are important structures for the advancement of women's equality and we must ensure that gender is integrated into all their activities. The structures of National Machinery must also develop productive working relations with such institutions.

9.1 The Human Rights Commission which is concerned with advancement

and promotion of human rights. It will have the following functions:

- 9.1.1 education and awareness-raising;
- 9.1.2 monitoring government and parliament;
- 9.1.3 lobbying and advising parliament and government;
- 9.1.4 research;
- 9.1.5 investigation; and
- 9.1.6 assisting parties to obtain redress.

9.2 The Public Protector will assist the public when they have a complaint against the government or a government official for corrupt, inefficient or unfair treatment. He or she will try and resolve the complaint by informal methods.

9.3 The South African Law Commission is a key structure involved in legal research and legal reform.

9.4 The National Economic, Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) is a tripartite structure involved in major policy and legislative initiatives on issues relating to the economy, development and labour. Women already have a representative on the Development Chamber of Nedlac through the Women's National Coalition.

10 *Women's Organisations in Civil Society:*

It is the experience of many countries that National Machinery alone cannot significantly shift public policy agendas for women without the participation of organisations in civil society. In other words, strong women's organisations are an important part of an effective National Machinery. This has three immediate implications for National Machinery:

10.1 The institutions of National Machinery must have structures and mechanisms to facilitate a constructive relationship with organisations in civil society.

10.2 Part of the role of National Machinery should be to empower women's organisations through capacity-building, education and training, the provision of information and resources. This can be done in a number of ways. For example:

10.2.1 All government structures should provide information on their functions and on the substantive policies, programmes and laws in their departments which affect women.

10.2.2 All government structures should endeavour to provide appropriate education or training. For example, the health department should educate the public about women's health.

10.2.3 The Commission for Gender Equality may

conduct specific programmes around capacity-building of groups or organisations.

10.3 Research, technical assistance, monitoring, advocacy and awareness-raising by organisations in civil society will play an important role in the effective development and implementation of the National Gender Policy and Plan of Action by the National Machinery.

11 *Strategies for development and implementation of National Machinery:*

A suggested programme for the establishment of National Machinery is set out below. The process of establishing National Machinery should at all times take into account constraints relating to human, technical and financial resources as well as the need to work within, and transform, existing institutions where possible. The latter point is particularly important in setting up Gender Desks in the

various government departments.

11.1 Short term - one year from January 1996:

In the immediate short term, the process could be driven by the Gender Unit in the RDP which is the only structure in place - **if it were given sufficient resources** to do this. In the absence of such resources, responsibility must lie with a government department. The following should be achieved:

11.1.1 Both the Office on the Status of Women announced by the Deputy-President and the Commission for Gender Equality (currently in bill form) should be established during this period.

11.1.2 The National Gender Policy and Plan of Action (already under way in the Women's Empowerment Programme) should also be in place.

11.1.3 Gender Desks in some government departments should be operational by the end of this period.

11.1.4 The Parliamentary Women's Caucus should become an effective caucus.

11.2 Medium term - three years from January 1996:

During this period, it would be expected that all government departments establish Gender Desks and that the National Gender Policy is operational in all of these departments.

11.3 Long term - five years from January 1996:

Full machinery set up and operational. Review of National Gender Policy and Plan of Action, as well as National Machinery by the end of this period.

12 *Provincial Structures:*

Many provinces have established provincial gender structures within their provincial governments and/or legislatures. Although, each province may need to tailor these structures to their specific requirements, it is suggested that the general principles of the National Model can be followed in the provinces. In other words, it is necessary to establish regional machinery along the following lines:

12.1 a structure in provincial governments (Office of the Premier) to develop a regional gender policy and plan of action and to co-ordinate activities;

12.2 structures in provincial departments (gender desks as part of a regional gender management system);

12.3 a women's caucus in the provincial legislature; and

12.4 structures in civil society (a regional Commission on Gender Equality or a coalition of women's organisations).

National Machinery should assist the regions in the development of these structures.

13 *Local Government:*

The development of gender structures at local level should not be overlooked. Local government will be responsible for the delivery of basic needs, including cleansing, community services, economic development, environmental protection, elections, electricity, health, housing, library services, licensing, parks and recreation, planning, produce markets, protection, rates, tariffs and taxes, roads, sewage, traffic, transport and water.¹⁵

It is well known that the inadequate provision of these basic needs tends to impact more strongly on women than men. Gender sensitive policies and procedures at this level of government are therefore crucial to women's equality and full enjoyment of their human rights.

Once more, the same principles which are applied at national level can be adapted to the development of local government machinery. It is important to establish structures and

¹⁵ Section 168 of the Working Draft of the New Constitution.

mechanisms at the executive and legislative levels of local government. The role of organisations, especially community based organisations, within civil society is particularly important here.

14 *Conclusion:*

The latest version of **Beijing Agender** cites Deputy Minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi as saying that "National Machinery is central to the transformation process". It also quotes NGO representative to Beijing, Joyce Siwani, stating that: "The time for consultation has passed. I don't want to be invited to another seminar on what we should be doing. What we need now is implementation: immediate implementation".¹⁶ These quotes capture the urgency that women feel about the establishment of National Machinery. There can no longer be any excuse.

¹⁶ C. Lowe Morna, *ibid* at 1 and 2.