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## ***MEDIA STATEMENT***

For immediate release  
Wednesday, 09 August 2023

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### **SALGA Women's Commission Affirms Commitment to Women's Empowerment and Equality in Local Government**

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On the occasion of South Africa's Women's Month commemoration, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) pays homage to the pioneering spirit of over 20,000 women who marched to the Union Buildings on August 9, 1956, courageously protesting the unjust extension of Pass Laws to women. Since that pivotal moment, women have been at the forefront of shaping our nation's destiny, underpinned by the adoption of the Women's Charter of 1954.

The SALGA Women's Commission (SWC), the authoritative national advocate for women in local government, stands united in its unwavering commitment to advancing women's empowerment, gender equality, and equity initiatives within the realm of local governance. With a focus to amplify women's representation and active engagement, the Commission remains firmly dedicated to the 50:50 principle, advocating for women's equitable participation in both political representation and senior management roles across local government.

The SWC celebrates this year's Women's Month under the overarching theme: **“Accelerating socio-economic opportunities for empowerment of women.”** The theme locates local government at the centre of coordination of government and business efforts to empower women. Accelerating socio-economic empowerment of women means favourable procurement policies in municipalities that will bring on board women benefaction. The Local Economic Development (LED) programs must empower women in businesses and provide funding and new opportunities for women entrepreneurs. This is part of mainstreaming women in the business of municipalities.

Since its establishment in 2012, the SWC has been a steadfast advocate for achieving a balanced 50:50 gender representation within SALGA's governance structures. Significant strides have been taken in pursuit of this objective, particularly evident in the leadership elections since 2011, where women have consistently accounted for 50% of the elected representatives. This equitable representation extends into SALGA's Senior Management, where a commendable 50% parity has been realized both at the Executive Level and throughout the senior management echelons.

The framework guiding Local Government operations, as stipulated in the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 (Act 117), section 11 (3), underlines the imperative of gender equality.

It prescribes that every political party and councillor should actively strive to ensure that their candidates list comprises at least 50% women, thereby promoting an even distribution of both female and male candidates across the list.

Recognizing the critical role played by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), collaborative efforts encompassing all sectors of society are essential to fortify the implementation of this legislative provision. Acknowledging the shortfall in the effectiveness of previous advocacy initiatives, there's an imminent necessity to establish a novel approach to partnering with the IEC to enhance its role in this endeavour.

Highlighting the disparities that persist, UN Women underscores that although South African women constitute more than 52% of the population, they remain underrepresented in crucial sectors of the economy, specifically in terms of meaningful involvement, contributions, benefits, and decision-making roles.

Furthermore, the SWC has noted the regression in upholding the commitment to achieving gender balance within governmental structures, as evidenced by the outcomes of recent elections.

According to the 2020 non-financial census conducted by Statistics SA across all 257 municipalities nationwide, the management landscape comprises 23,230 individuals, encompassing mayoral and councillor positions. This detailed examination reveals that 14,209 of these positions are currently occupied by men, while a mere 9,021 are held by women. Following the municipal elections on November 1, 2021, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) reported that out of the 9,473 elected councillors, 63% were male, with a diminutive 37% being female. These figures are startling considering not only the higher percentage of women among South Africa's population but also the notable gender disparity in voter registration, with 55% women and 45% men registered to vote in 2021.

The SWC calls upon every segment of society to join forces and collectively pursue the realization of women's emancipation. It is imperative to provide women the space they deserve and duly acknowledge their invaluable contributions to shaping our society into what it stands as today.

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**Issued by: South African Local Government Association**

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