

Top Women Conference features UN's Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

The inaugural Top Women Conference, hosted by Topco Media, features Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the under-secretary-general of the United Nations and the executive director of UN Women, amongst other top women speakers.

The conference, taking place on 17 and 18 August at Emperors Palace, recognises outstanding leadership, inspiration, vision, and innovation in South African organisations.



“Mlambo-Ngcuka has devoted her career to issues of human rights, equality and social justice,” says director of Topco, Karla Fletcher. “Not only has she worked in government, civil society and within the private sector, she is also driving the gender equality agenda, an area where progress is being made, but too slowly. In some organisations, the debate on 50/50 gender parity by 2030 still exists, similarly to B-BBEE codes of good practice when it was first introduced as law. What we have noted is that whether it is debated or not, the point is it is not going away and you can choose to positively affect and gain from this process, or alternatively be left behind. We need people who are going to push the gender agenda.

“There are still various barriers in South Africa that prevent women from fully participating at the highest levels of business and government.”

Janine Hicks from the Commission for Gender Equality states, “In South Africa, women represent just 29% of executive managers, 22% of directors of companies, 9% of chairs of boards and 2.4% of chief executives. Under the employment equity legislation, companies are required to conduct an audit to assess what internal policies can be put in place to lower barriers that women face.”

Insightful speakers

Topco Media, in partnership with The Department of Women, is hosting the conference to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Women’s March.

Amongst the speakers are Thuli Madonsela, the Public Protector of South Africa; Jenna Clifford, jewellery designer; and Susan Shabangu, Minister of Women in the Presidency.

“We aim to facilitate growth by communicating, educating, sharing and tracking progress. We have alumni of over 250 award winners who will highlight studies of programmes they have implemented and have proven to be successful over the last 13 years; these organisations and individuals rank amongst the top and most sustainable in the country. They have overcome some of the many local challenges of doing business in South Africa by empowering women, and more so, can relate to the direct impact on productivity and efficiency in their business due to the programmes they have put in place. The event will become a feeding ground for successful implementation of 50/50 by 2030.

“In addition, companies will be asked to pledge their progressive plans in reaching 50/50 by 2030 to assist the government in monitoring the progress, which will be reviewed annually from 2017. With this year marking the 60th year since the march to the Union Buildings, the agenda to close the gender gap and to empower women in business is now being embraced by the public and private sectors more than ever. The Top Women Conference creates a platform to acknowledge, celebrate and gain insight into the remarkable work that has been done by individuals, organisations and government.”

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