

**Remarks by H. E. Sibongiseni Dlamini-Mntambo upon
receiving an award, “Women Who Work”, Ottawa, 6
December 2018.**

Excellencies

Fellow award winners

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I cannot receive this award without recognising giants in our anti-apartheid struggle. This year we mark the centenary of Mama Albertina Sisulu. Earlier this year we also lost the mother of our nation, Mama Winnie Mandela.

SEIZE THE DAY

While we recognise that there is immense power within every woman, we must also recognise that we are stronger if we stand together; if we give a voice to those women who are voiceless, who are being silenced. Giants like Mama Albertina Sisulu and Mama Winnie Mandela opened doors for us women of South Africa. It is our duty and

responsibility to continue opening doors for other girls and women who are struggling to have their voices heard in today's society.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ladies and gentlemen, on 27 November, the South African High Commission launched the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence with the UN Women Undersecretary, Ms Pumzile Mlambo Ngcuka as the guest of honour. It saddens me that this annual period of activism is necessary. In Africa we often talk about the philosophy of *ubuntu*. Put simply, this is the belief that "*I am because you are*"; that being human is defined by our interactions within other humans.

The notion of gender-based violence should have no place in a society that subscribes to the philosophy of *ubuntu*. But, alas, we read horrific stories from every corner of the globe. So - until we live in a society that truly believes that I am because you are - let's embrace these 16 days of activism and never give up the struggle.

TEAMWORK

I'm grateful for this award. The truth is, I did not achieve it on my own. I have a team whose depth of commitment towards making a difference cannot be measured. Forgive the cliché, but they have been the wind beneath my wings, reliable, responsible, professional and driven.

They often think I have crazy ideas, but I think their ideas are even crazier. But these crazy ideas are what make us thrive. As a leader, I welcome when they come into my office and say "High Commissioner... we need to tone it down here." Or "High Commissioner... this is not thought provoking!" As a team, we recognise that every idea or opinion matters.

So, I want to inform the organisers that by recognising me with this award, you have actually recognised the excellence of my team. To the Ambassador of Gabon, my "boss", thank you. Team South Africa humbly accepts the award

I thank you!