Honourable Minister
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for the confidence that I could slot into this session at such short notice. It is good place to be because you provided me with a cast iron excuse for making a bad presentation.

The brief for this slot was to make a presentation on the International Experience as regards enhancing women’s leadership in S&T. I persuaded Nozipho that because of the short notice invitation I should speak from an angle that I have recently done some work on, i.e. The enabling environment for gender equity and women’s empowerment.

I thought that this topic is also appropriate for 3 reasons
a) I believe that before we can compare ourselves to anyone, we should first ensure that we comply with our own national imperatives. My contribution will hopefully assist in the assessment of the DST’s compliance with these imperatives and with the international conventions on gender to which South Africa is a signatory.

b) I thought we could take this opportunity to look at DST’s women programs in the context the Government imperative for
women’s empowerment and gender equality. The DST women’s programmes are not just peculiarities of Department but are part of the mandates bestowed on all Government Departments. Our programmes should thus be systemic within all areas of DST’s mandate and also systematic according to Departments’ responsibility for creating an enabling environment for all to participate effectively in S&T.

c) Lastly I chose this topic because I believe that the enhancement of women’s leadership in S&T will be realized as part of our general pursuit of women’s empowerment in S&T. Women’s appointment to leadership positions should be a culmination of the DST’s program of empowerment and an outcome of a culture or an enabling environment for gender equity.

Let’s now briefly look at the mandate for women’s empowerment and gender equality and also examine the DST’s enabling environment for women’s empowerment and gender equality.

a. The imperative for gender equity and women’s empowerment in South Africa is derived primarily from our Constitution which is founded on values of Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of all human rights and freedoms as well
as non-racism and non-sexism. Gender equality is one of the cornerstones of the South African Bill of Rights (Chapter 2) as encapsulated mainly in Clause 9(1),(3), Chapter 2 which state that everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law; the state may not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of race, age, gender sex, pregnancy, marital status…”.

b. South Africa’s National Policy Framework on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality (NPFGW)

The Office on the Status of Women drew on the prescripts of the Bill of Rights and developed South Africa’s National Policy Framework on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality (NPFGW) was adopted by Cabinet in December 2000. The (NPFGW) is a generic framework which elaborates the national vision of gender equality and the values and principles which underpin the National Gender Programme. Importantly, it calls upon all national Departments to develop sectoral gender policy guidelines to translate the national imperatives for women’s empowerment and gender equality into their sector policies, programmes and activities. It is important to note that the NGPFHW specifically focuses on Women’s Empowerment as a deliberate strategy towards achieving gender equality
and urges government departments to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable.

c. South Africa is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the Beijing Platform of Action; Millennium Development Goals – Goal 7, Target 9. These conventions and agreements commit States to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms and to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system. Periodically UN Member States report on their performance as regards gender equity and women’s empowerment.

Non-compliance to these imperatives constitutes a serious omission which may seem to endorse discriminatory practice.
How does DST fare with regard to compliance to these imperatives

The DST makes pronouncements on gender equity & Redress in its founding document - The S&T White Paper. It states as follows:

The most pervasive effect of the system of apartheid is the legacy of inequalities generated by decades of policy interventions specifically designed to exclude the majority of South Africans from participation in social, political and economic spheres of life. Programmes need to redress the inequalities which have excluded black women and men from the mainstream of South African society.

By establishing appropriate enabling S&T policies in South Africa, we could move toward equity. This expectation is rooted in our belief in human rights and the belief that sustainable human development will occur faster where equity exists. Deliberate and affirmative actions need to be implemented. Aggressive promotion of the principle of lifelong learning gives South Africa the best chance, in the long term, of redressing SET-related skills, where the imbalances were most pronounced.
The national R&D Strategy acknowledges the need for the transformation of the S&T labour force to include more black people and women but it does not elaborate much of the strategy for transformation. It states:

... South Africa is suffering from “frozen demographics” in the science, engineering and technology workforce, both with respect to race and gender. A winning human resource strategy will require new approaches and investments on both supply and demand sides. On the one hand, a highly targeted approach towards increasing excellence in mathematics and the sciences among black matriculants and young women is a critical requirement.

The Department established a successful science for youth programme and a bursary programme for graduate and postgraduate studies to ensure a steady flow of the pipeline of new researchers and scientists.

The DST has an exemplary Award programme for Women in Science.

NACI, was established in terms of the National Advisory Council Act to serve as a think-tank on innovation policy matters; it advises the Minister for Science and Technology on the role and contribution of science, technology and
innovation in achieving national objectives. NACI operates through expert committees focusing on various scientific disciplines and issues. One of these is Science, Engineering and Technology for Women (SET4W), the host of this symposium.

HOWEVER, DESPITE ALL THESE IMPORTANT EFFORTS, THE DST DOES NOT HAVE A SPECIFIC POLICY DIRECTED AT WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY.

**Implications of the lack of Policy**

a. The DST does not comply with the requirements of the National Policy Framework on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality (NPFGW) which requires the DST and other Departments to draw on the principles provided by the Framework and produce a relevant policy to guide the Department and its institutions towards gender equality and women’s empowerment.

b. The Department lacks a vision and standards(targets, indicators) for gender equality and women’s empowerment;
c. The Department cannot monitor or accurately report on its performance on gender equity and women’s empowerment because it has not set standards for this;

d. The Department cannot monitor discriminatory practices and may be unaware of their existence because it has not created a culture of gender equality and women’s empowerment through the enforcement of the provisions of its gender policy;

e. The Department cannot enforce gender equity and the representation of women in S&T decision-making bodies because it has no enforceable standards enshrined in a gender policy.

f. The Department is not accountable to an S&T women’s constituency because it has not created a platform for communication with it through a gender policy.

Finally, in the absence of a gender policy, the appointment of women to leadership positions will be a matter of luck rather than a result of policy imperative. The enhancement of women’s leadership will also be a matter of catering for the lucky few who sneaked in. The role of NACI in monitoring and advising the Ministry would be easier and much more authentic if it was guided by policy.
Thank you
The Minister encouraged “all heads of departments to include the 8 - Principle Action Plan in their department's action plans towards achieving women’s empowerment and gender equality within the public service workplace.

The Minister of Public Service and Administration encourages all heads of the government departments to include the following 8 - principles in their departmental action

1. TRANSFORMATION FOR NON-SEXISM
Promoting and protecting human dignity and human rights of women, including the rights of women with disabilities.

2. ESTABLISHING A POLICY ENVIRONMENT
The full implementation of national policies and implementation guidelines on women's empowerment and gender equality, through the development of the departmental and sector - specific guidelines as well as standard operating procedures.

3. MEETING EQUITY TARGETS
Ensuring women's full participation in decision-making through the employment of 50% women at all levels of the SMS.

4. CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
Putting in place departmental and sector Gender Management Systems, adequate institutional mechanisms and dedicated Gender Units.

5. GENDER MAINSTREAMING
Incorporating gender perspective into all work of the Department

6. EMPOWERMENT
Capacity development for women’s advancement and gender equality.

7. PROVIDING ADEQUATE RESOURCES
Availing adequate human, physical and financial resources for advancing gender equality

Ensuring full responsibility, ownership for and reporting on advancing Gender equality within the Public Service

ACCOUNTABILITY, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Ministry of Public Service and Administration RSA
The development of the various programs aimed at women’s empowerment need also to be based on clear and reliable evidence drawn from the ground about women’s status and needs.