

# Women in energy reflect on challenges, successes

MIDRAND: Women in the energy sector came together on Friday, 22 August 2014, to take stock of the challenges and successes of South African women.



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The Women's Seminar - which is a partnership between consulting company Mzesi Academy, the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Energy Corporation of South Africa (Necsa), among others - comes as the entire country celebrates Women's Month.

Women present at the seminar, held at Accolades Conference Centre in Midrand, agreed that there was a need to demystify the nuclear industry, given that it is a complex one.

"Nuclear is not only about bombs, it's not only about Fukushima - it's also about medicine," said managing director of NTP Radioisotopes SOC Ltd (NTP), Tina Eboka.

NTP is a subsidiary of Necsa, which reports to the Department of Energy. It uses nuclear technology facilities as well as expertise to produce a range of products that have applications in healthcare, among others.

Eboka said it is important to celebrate women who are making a change to the country's landscape in boardrooms and other aspects of South African life, just like the women of 1956.

National Nuclear Regulator (NNR) senior manager, Ditebogo Kgomo, urged women to dream big and to support each other.

"Women are very few in this industry, we need to support each other," she told delegates.

Eboka said women must create opportunities for themselves so as to address problems such as unemployment.

"We still see too many roadblocks for women in business, including financial roadblocks," she said.

A lot of developments can be expected in the nuclear field as South Africa increases its investment in the industry. Delivering the budget vote of the Department of Energy in July, Energy Minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson said that R850 million of her department's R7.4-billion budget will go towards nuclear development.

"On the nuclear front, R850 million has been allocated to the department and its relevant agencies in order to undertake further research and development, especially in regard to safety matters," said the Minister at the time.

South Africa's nuclear energy policy was approved in 2008 and was further enhanced by the approval of the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) 2010 - 2030, which stipulates that nuclear power will form part of the country's energy mix to a level of 9 600 MW.

## **Women's Month**

In South Africa, 9 August is a public holiday in commemoration of the 1956 Women's March. On that day, about 20,000 women marched to the Union Buildings to protest against the inclusion of women in the pass laws, which sought to control the movements of black people.

Earlier this month, President Jacob Zuma said important strides have been made in realising the vision of the Women's Charter since the dawn of freedom and democracy.

Addressing the main Women's Day celebration in Umlazi, Durban, earlier this month, President Zuma said the Women's Charter of 1954 influenced the content and spirit of the 1994 Women's Charter for effective equality, and also the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996.

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