

Sona 2020, the AU, Miss Universe pledge to empower women

By Leigh Andrews

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Here's how President Ramaphosa's Sona address of 13 February 2020 promised to shine a light on making a better future through inclusive economic growth, with a firm stance on the empowerment of women and taking steps against gender-based violence.



Image via the [Miss Universe Facebook page](#).

When then-Miss SA Zozibini Tunzi took the Miss Universe crown, she won over the world with her words of empowerment during her closing speech:

“ I grew up in a world where a woman who looks like me, with my kind of skin and my kind of hair, was never considered to be beautiful. I think that it is time that that stops today... Through my win, I hope I have inspired people, even if just one person, to be themselves at all times and to never compromise their identities, and to insert themselves in spaces where they feel that people like them do not belong. ”



How the media is reacting to Zozibini Tunzi

10 Dec 2019



Determined to dispel the myth that beauty queens have no depth, Tunzi is using her platform to change the narrative around gender-based violence.

She believes it's time to lay the responsibility at the door of perpetrators and will use her year of reign working towards making them aware that they have to change their behaviour.

#DesignIndaba2018: 'Advice for the African girl child' - Lebo Mashile

Leigh Andrews 26 Feb 2018





Little wonder then that Tunzi was seen as a beacon of hope at Sona 2020.

Rebecca Davis wrote on the *Daily Maverick*, “[How Miss Universe and Mr Springbok saved the night at stormy Sona](#)”, highlighting the impact of Tunzi and Siya Kolisi’s star power to soothe ruffled feathers after a very disruptive beginning to the evening, that resulted in a 90-minute delay before we first heard from President Ramaphosa.

Davis writes:

“ As the two took turns to stand and wave to the House, a ripple of admiration and the most sincere applause of the night followed. Suddenly, everything seemed calm and under control once again. ”

Indeed, “the luminescence of Miss Universe and the Springbok hero”, turned attendees’ attention from rehashing the past to instead focusing on what can be done to improve the future.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

About last night! I had the honor of attending the State of The Nation address in parliament as the President's guest. Thank you @cyrilramaphosa 🙏🙏🙏🙏
#SONA

”

When he did finally get to begin his Sona 2020 address, President Ramaphosa mentioned the following, amongst other much-awaited plans, to alleviate unemployment, strengthen the economy and solve the electricity crisis.



#Sona20: Ramaphosa confirms own use generation plan

14 Feb 2020



President Ramaphosa's points on working to end GBV

- Tonight, we are joined by Zozibini Tunzi, whose ascendance to the Miss Universe title is a reminder of our potential to achieve greatness against the odds.
- Fellow South Africans, over the last six months, the nation has been galvanised – across communities, government, civil society, religious groupings, the judiciary and parliament – to end the crisis of violence perpetrated by men against women. It has been a truly united and determined response from all South Africans.
- Through building social compacts across society to fight this scourge we will be able to achieve much more. But it is only the beginning of the struggle. We implemented an emergency action plan and reprioritised R1.6bn to support this plan until the end of the current financial year. There has been progress in several areas.
- We will amend the Domestic Violence Act to better protect victims in violent domestic relationships and the Sexual Offences Act to broaden the categories of sex offenders whose names must be included in the National Register for Sex Offenders, and we will pass a law to tighten bail and sentencing condition in cases that involve gender-based violence.
- The empowerment of women is critical to inclusive economic growth. We are introducing the SheTradesZA platform to assist women-owned businesses to participate in global value chains and markets.
- Over the next five years, the Industrial Development Corporation is targeting R10bn of own and partner funding for women-empowered businesses.
- To create a larger market for small businesses, we plan to designate 1,000 locally produced products that must be procured from SMMEs.



#FairnessFirst: #Sona2018 leaves SA's social media set hopeful of real change

Leigh Andrews 26 Feb 2018



Taking the sentiment from country to the continent

President Ramaphosa has also just returned from Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, where South Africa assumed the chairship of the African Union for 2020. He said:

“ We take up this responsibility at an important time for our continent... And with the economic empowerment of Africa's women during its term as AU chair, working with all member states on measures to promote financial inclusion, preferential procurement and preferential trade arrangements for women. ”



Empowering SA women in agriculture

12 Feb 2020



In addition, he mentioned that the AU heads of state have pledged their support for measures to end gender-based violence on the continent, and will work towards the adoption of an AU Convention on Violence against Women during the course of this year.

From the continent to the universe

President Ramaphosa further added to Tunzi's star power earlier in the week, when he appointed her as an ambassador against gender-based violence in South Africa.



Good Things Guy, overall winner at the 2019 South African Blog Awards

12 Feb 2020



[Good Things Guy](#), recently named South Africa's Blog of the Year for 2019 for the third consecutive year, reports that this honour, bestowed on Tunzi while home on her week-long 'victory tour', is possibly her most important title to date.

Her power to inspire others was clear from the following tweet on taking the Miss Universe title:

“ Tonight a door was opened and I could not be more grateful to have been the one to have walked through it. May every little girl who witnessed this moment forever believe in the power of her dreams and may they see their faces reflected in mine. I am [#MissUniverse2019](#). [pic.twitter.com/gMkjmVCabo](#)— Zozibini Tunzi (@zozitunzi) [December 9, 2019](#) ”

But as we all know, words mean nothing without action.

Yvonne Wakefield, founder of The Warrior Project, an online portal with information and resources for victims of domestic and gender-based violence, says it was disappointing that Sona lacked specific detail on progress achieved with the R1.6bn in allegedly allocated funds or plans going forward to turn the tide against such violence and femicide.



Yvonne Wakefield launches The Warrior Project to help domestic abuse, gender-based violence victims

6 Aug 2019



Wakefield says all eyes are now on the Finance Minister for a precise report in the Budget Speech.

Wakefield concluded:

“ Words give us hope but they are just words. We need to see concrete actions from our leaders. ”

All eyes on the upcoming Budget Speech and the actions of Miss Universe, then. Here's hoping for a brighter, more inclusive future for all.



#FairnessFirst: Enough waiting. Take this pledge, be the change you want to see

Leigh Andrews 3 Feb 2020



ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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