



MEDIA STATEMENT

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ECOSA President Speaks on Female Retention and Leadership in Engineering at the Women and Leadership Conference

The Engineering Council of South Africa's (ECOSA) Acting President Refilwe Buthelezi Pr Eng, today, 06 April 2022, at the Women and Leadership Conference under the theme "Develop, Unite and Empower" held at Outbaai Hotel in George, highlighted challenges that hinder the retention of female engineers and proposed opportunities to circumvent the challenges.

Speaking at the Conference that boasted female representation from the engineering, mining and infrastructure industries, Ms Buthelezi said, "Female engineers form a small but integral part of the South African and global engineering fraternity". "The resultant gender disparity in all technical professions present a significant challenge to females in the sector, as well as to governments, corporates and higher education institutions, particularly because jobs in the engineering, infrastructure as well as mining industries are central to innovation and economic growth", added Ms Buthelezi.

In highlighting the key challenges that hinder the retention of female engineers, Ms Buthelezi noted gender discrimination, work-life balance, and a lack of support by the organisation. Furthermore, the conservative nature of the current engineering sector in South Africa allows little room for diversity and innovation and the limited access to information restricts well-informed decision making by female engineers.

Moreover, despite all the efforts encouraging women to study engineering, over 40% of highly skilled females who enter the field end up leaving.

To address these challenges Ms Buthelezi emphasised the importance of not only attracting female talent, but also to be able to develop, engage progress and retain female talent once inside the organisation.

To this, she proposed organisations needing to leverage several valuable resources by creating an atmosphere that is conducive. This includes; increasing diversity and inclusion across engineering, training and developing females, affording females opportunities to advance their careers and assisting them to lead a balanced work and life.

In her conclusion, Ms Buthelezi accentuated that “If the future of engineering aims to be more gender equitable, the attraction, education and retention of technical women must be understood and addressed effectively”.

The two day conference under the theme “Develop, Unite and Empower” will conclude on Wednesday, 07 April 2022, with speakers from the Department of Transport and Public Works, Green Building Council of South Africa, PM Aviation, SMEC South Africa as well as Women in Science and Engineering in Africa.

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Issued by the Engineering Council of South Africa

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