



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

**CSW70 INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE AMONG YOUTH
REPRESENTATIVES**

Priority Theme: Ensuring and Strengthening Access to
Justice for All Women and Girls

Commission on the Status of Women – 70th Session

16 MARCH 2026

SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE CSW70 INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE AMONG YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES – *Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls* | ±3 minutes

16 March 2026

Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I bring greetings from young women and girls of South Africa and from across the Southern African region.

South Africa aligns itself with the Agreed Conclusions of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women and reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We reaffirm our commitment to the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, reconcondensing that progress towards SDG5 and SDG 16 remain uneven and insufficient.

Access to justice for women and girls requires more than legal commitments. It requires institutions and policy frameworks that empower young people - particularly young women and girls - to participate meaningfully in governance, economic life and justice systems.

At the global level, the millstones of recent years gives us resolve. In 2025, GBV was explicitly included in the CSW Political Deceleration for the first time¹, a hard fought milestone. The African Union adopted its first legally binding pan-African instruments dedicated exclusively to ending violence against women and girls.² And 88 percent of UN Member States have now enacted legislation and service to eliminating violence against women and girls,³ according to the Secretary-General's Beijing +30 Report.

These are not small achievements. They are proof that when political will meets structure youth participation, change is possible.

¹ <https://preventgbv.org/endinggbv-what-2025-taught-us/>

² <https://au.int/en/aucevawg>

³ <https://preventgbv.org/endinggbv-what-2025-taught-us/>



However progress is not protection.

Femicide and gender based violence continue to devastate our communities. Young women are disproportionately affected, and justice system continue to fail them, through bias, increasingly, and under resourcing. We must treat femicide not as a social issue but as a justice emergency.

Legal empowerment must reach those from furthest from power. We need accessible legal aid, youth-centered services, and community paralegals resourced to extend justice into the margins. Young women cannot claim rights they do not know they have. Technology must be a bridge, not a barrier, with digital justice tools that are inclusive, safe and backed by offline alternatives for young women in rural and underserved communities.

Therefore the question before us is not whether we know what needs to be done. The question is whether we are willing to resource and sustain the structures that do it.

In South Africa, one of the key national interventions advancing this objective is the Integrated Youth Development Strategy (IYDS), implemented by the National Youth Development Agency in alignment with the National Youth Policy 2030. The IYDS is not a programme. The IYDS is not a programme. It is a whole-of-government architecture that brings together over 30 national government departments, 9 provincial administrations and all 257 municipalities to mainstream youth priorities across every layer government planning and service delivery. Therefore, embedding youth empowerment, employment, digital inclusion, legal empowerment, and social protection.

This model demonstrates something critical: when youth structures are properly institutionalised and adequately resourced, they do not duplicate government, they amplify it. They extend the reach of justice into communities that would otherwise remain invisible to the state.

And this is precisely the call I bring to this Commission today. What South Africa has built nationally must be mirrored at every level, continental, regional, and multilateral. Youth structures across the African Union, across SADC, and within the UN system must be treated not as consultative add-ons, but as core infrastructure for justice



delivery. They must be financed. They must be given institutional standing. They must be sustainably resourced so that the energy and expertise of young people is not lost between sessions and summits.

Investing in youth structures is not a parallel track to achieving justice for women and girls. It is the track.

Chair, the commitments made in this room must translate into funded mandates, not unfunded aspirations. South Africa calls on Member States, UN entities, and international partners to match political commitment with real investment in national youth development agencies, in regional youth frameworks, and in the multilateral mechanisms that give young people genuine power to shape the justice systems that govern their lives.

Justice that cannot be accessed is not justice at all.

I thank you.