



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
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**SOUTHERN AFRICAN UNION ADVENTIST WOMEN'S
MINISTRIES CONGRESS
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*Woman Redeemed: From Failed Plans To Promises
Fulfilled*

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SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE

CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN UNION ADVENTIST WOMEN'S MINISTRIES CONGRESS – *Keynote*

Address | ±30 minutes

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Good evening, women of God.

I greet you in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It is a privilege to stand before you this evening, not only as the Executive Chairperson of the National Youth Development Agency, but also as a woman who understands that positions of responsibility do not exempt us from the same questions of faith, character, disappointment, healing and purpose that every one of us must confront. Whatever our professions, titles or responsibilities may be, we remain women navigating real lives, real pressures and real moments of uncertainty. That is why the theme of this Congress, “Woman Redeemed: From Failed Plans to Promises Fulfilled,” resonates so deeply.

It speaks to the space between what we once imagined our lives would be and what life has actually required of us, and to the possibility that God can still do meaningful work in that space.

And sometimes, the most difficult part is not that the plan failed. It is what the failure begins to make us believe about ourselves.

That is where I want to take us to John chapter 8.

We encounter a woman whose name Scripture does not give us. We know her through what she has done: she is the woman caught in adultery. She is brought before Jesus publicly, surrounded by people who have already judged her. Her failure has become a spectacle, and the crowd is prepared to make that moment the definition of who she is.



But Jesus does something very different.

He does not participate in her humiliation, yet He does not pretend that her actions do not matter. When those who have accused her have left, He tells her, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.”

There is something profound in that encounter because Jesus offers her grace without removing responsibility. He refuses to reduce her to her failure, but He also calls her towards a different way of living.

I think that is an important understanding of redemption for us as women. Redemption does not require us to pretend that nothing has ever gone wrong in our lives. It allows us to confront what has gone wrong without believing that it has the right to define everything that comes afterwards.

That distinction becomes particularly important in the way we relate to other people.

Every woman in this room has influence somewhere. Some of you lead organisations, businesses, ministries or teams. Others lead within families, communities, friendships or congregations. Some of you are mentoring younger women; others may be at the beginning of discovering what your own influence looks like. Formal titles are not the only measure of leadership. Wherever people are affected by our words, our decisions, our attitudes and our example, we have a responsibility for the way we use that influence.

And we do not leave ourselves behind when we enter those spaces. We bring our experiences with us. We bring rejection, disappointment, insecurity, grief and sometimes shame. If those experiences remain unexamined, they can begin to influence how we treat people who had nothing to do with what happened to us.

A woman who has never dealt with rejection may find herself threatened by another woman's success. Someone who has been humiliated may eventually become comfortable humiliating others once she has enough power to do so. Someone who has spent years feeling insignificant may become controlling when she finally finds herself in a position where people have to listen to her.



Our pain may help us understand some of our behaviour, but it cannot become an excuse for the harm that behaviour causes.

This is why I believe there should be no shame in doing the work of understanding ourselves. There should be no shame in therapy or counselling, no shame in pastoral support, no shame in seeking mentorship, and no shame in asking someone we trust to tell us the truth about ourselves. There is also no shame in admitting that we were wrong and taking responsibility when our behaviour has affected someone negatively.

For some women, part of the journey of faith will involve prayer and Scripture; for others, it may also involve professional support, honest conversation and learning healthier ways of responding to difficult experiences. These things need not compete with our faith. They can form part of the responsibility we take for the lives God has entrusted to us.

The reason this matters is that what we refuse to confront within ourselves can eventually become something that another person has to carry.

This is particularly important when we consider the way women relate to one another. We speak, rightly, about women supporting women, but support cannot simply mean opening doors or celebrating one another publicly. It must also mean creating relationships in which women can be corrected without being humiliated, where they can disagree without being punished, and where another woman's growth does not make us feel that we are losing our own place.

South African evidence reminds us that the environments women experience matter. Deloitte's research involving 500 South African women found that 43% described their mental health as poor or extremely poor, while 40% expected to leave their current roles within two years. The reasons were complex, including burnout, stress, pay and advancement opportunities.

We should not take those figures and reduce them to one explanation, but we should allow them to challenge us. When a woman is struggling in an environment, we should not always begin by asking whether she is strong enough to cope.



Sometimes we need to ask what the environment is asking her to endure, and whether we have contributed to making that environment healthier or more difficult.

This brings me to another woman in Scripture.

In Mark chapter 5, we meet a woman who has been suffering for twelve years. She has spent years looking for an answer, carrying a condition that affected both her physical life and her place within society. When she encounters Jesus, she reaches out and touches His garment. Jesus stops and calls her forward, and He addresses her as “Daughter.”

I find that moment deeply significant because Jesus does not allow her condition to become her identity. He sees the person beyond what she has been carrying.

Many women understand what it means to function while carrying something that has never really been dealt with. We become good at appearing capable while privately struggling. We learn how to continue working, serving and caring for other people while avoiding the parts of ourselves that need attention.

But what we refuse to confront does not necessarily disappear. It can enter our friendships, our families, our workplaces and even our churches. It can influence how we respond when someone disagrees with us, how we receive correction, how we treat someone who is younger or less experienced, and how we respond when another woman succeeds.

That is why I believe that doing the work within ourselves is not selfish. It is part of how we become better people for those around us. And perhaps this is where the Fruit of the Spirit becomes particularly relevant to the work we are talking about tonight.

In Galatians 5, Paul speaks of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are not simply qualities we admire in other people; they are evidence of what is being formed within us. If we are asking God to redeem us, then we should also be willing to ask what that redemption is



producing in the way we speak to people, exercise authority, respond to disappointment, handle conflict and treat women who may have less power or influence than we do. It is possible to be successful, respected and even highly accomplished while still having parts of our character that God is asking us to surrender. The question is not only whether God has opened doors for us, but whether the person walking through those doors is becoming more loving, more patient, more gentle and more self-controlled.

And this is particularly important for the women coming after us.

The Adventist Women's Ministries itself places significant emphasis on mentoring younger women, describing mentoring as a relationship in which women encourage, teach, correct, share experience and help another person reach her God-given potential. It also recognises mentoring as part of developing future leaders.

The younger woman watching us is learning from more than what we tell her. She is watching how we behave when we are wrong. She is watching whether we apologise. She is watching how we treat women who have less influence than we do. She is watching whether our faith makes us more compassionate and accountable, or simply more certain that we are right.

I also want to acknowledge the significance of the relationship between institutions of faith and the public sector. Government cannot address the challenges facing our communities alone. Across our country, churches and faith-based organisations are often present in the places where policy eventually has to become lived reality - in families, communities, schools and in the spaces where people seek support during difficult moments. The work of government and the work of faith communities are different in their mandates, but there is considerable value in finding constructive ways to work alongside one another in service of society.

As Executive Chairperson of the National Youth Development Agency, I have seen how important these partnerships become when we are serious about creating opportunities and strengthening the communities in which young people and families must build their futures.



And perhaps this is where the theme of this Congress becomes even more meaningful. Moving from failed plans to promises fulfilled does not necessarily mean that God restores the exact life we originally imagined. Sometimes the promise is fulfilled through the woman we become while walking through the disappointment.

Philippians 1:6 reminds us that the God who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion. I find comfort in the fact that Scripture describes this as an ongoing work. It allows us to acknowledge that we are still learning, still growing, still being corrected and, in some areas of our lives, still healing.

So tonight, perhaps our prayer should not only be that God changes our circumstances. Perhaps we should also ask Him to show us what needs to change within us. We can ask Him for the humility to receive correction, the courage to seek help when we need it, and the honesty to recognise when something we experienced in the past is beginning to influence how we treat someone in the present.

Because the woman in John chapter 8 was not given permission to remain defined by her shame, and the woman in Mark chapter 5 was not left to remain defined by her suffering. Their encounters with Jesus opened the possibility of something beyond what had previously defined them.

That is what I hope we carry from this Congress. Our failed plans are real, our disappointments are real and our wounds are real, but none of them have to become the final authority over who we are or how we treat the people around us.

May we therefore have the courage to look honestly at ourselves, to seek healing where healing is needed, to accept correction without allowing shame to consume us, and to extend to other women the dignity and grace that we ourselves have received.



And when we think about the promise of redemption, may we understand that it is not only about what God does for us. It is also about what becomes possible for other people because of what God has done in us.

That is how a woman moves from a life marked by failed plans towards the fulfilment of God's promises: not because every chapter unfolded as she expected, but because she allowed God to transform even the difficult chapters into wisdom, character, compassion and purpose.

May God continue the good work He has begun in each of us, and may the women who encounter us find that our lives have become places where faith is accompanied by grace, where truth is accompanied by compassion, and where another woman's growth is something we are able to celebrate rather than fear.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.