



## **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY COMMEMORATION EVENT**

**23<sup>rd</sup> MARCH 2022**

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# **PRESS STATEMENT**

The Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation (BEDCO), in collaboration with Nedbank Lesotho, hosted an International Women's Day (IWD) commemoration event on Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 at AVANI Maseru in celebration of Basotho women entrepreneurs. The ceremony drew from the IWD 2022 theme: **"Celebrate women's achievement. Raise awareness against bias. Take action for equality."**

BEDCO deemed it necessary to commemorate IWD having understood that despite women having made breakthroughs in their various sectors, negative perceptions and stereotypical feelings against women continue to linger. Therefore, the objective of this event was to provide a platform through which women entrepreneurs could highlight the successes, breakthroughs, opportunities and challenges they face in business; this was done through speeches, roundtable discussions and interactive questions and answer sessions. Moreover, it was envisaged that the celebration would showcase how women can achieve success through collaboration despite the stereotype that they are unable to unite and work harmoniously.

Speakers at the event included Nedbank Lesotho SME Manager Ms. Thato Phohlo, UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Betty Wabunoha and Leading Women of Africa Group member Ms. Francisca 'Mapitso Matsoha. These women delved into the following topics, respectively: **'The Role of Nedbank in Enabling Women Entrepreneurs'**, **'The Role of Culture and Stereotypes in Women Entrepreneurship'** and **'An Introduction to the Leading Women of Africa Network'**.

Whereas the roundtable discussions are concerned, the topics '**Lessons from Seasoned Entrepreneurs**' and '**Mental Health of Women Entrepreneurs**' were the order of the day. The former topics' panel discussion was moderated by media personality Ms. Nthakoana Ngatane. The panelists comprised of A&C Holdings Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ms. Palesa Monkhi, Mahlakapese Holdings Founder/CEO Ms. Mats'eliso Mokuoane and Spec Savers Co-Founder/CEO Ms. Mamello Maxine Foloko. Women's and children's rights activist Ms. Lineo Tsikoane-Badia moderated the latter topics' panel discussion. Panelists included Phano ea Bophelo Beauty & Spa Founder/CEO Ms. 'Maphano Mohapi, Physical Wellness Centre Counselling Psychologist/Managing Director Ms. Lebohang 'Masekhonyana Bereng and Lekatsa Butchery & Catering Co-Founder Ms. Thato Lekatsa.

The audience was made up of an array of small, medium and large enterprises women business owners. 71 entrepreneurs registered online to physically attend the celebration. What truly made the event a success, aside from the speakers, moderators and panelists who shared their lived experiences, were the accounts from numerous audience members who shared their stories. Additional entertainment was provided by poet Thato Rannana and saxophonist Marcx Brass.

For her part, BEDCO CEO Ms. Idia Penane remarked on how inspirational the speeches, panel discussions and audience accounts were. Ms. Penane also expressed the importance of such events for the empowerment of women, further relaying the message that BEDCO will continue to create platforms that will celebrate and bring Basotho women in business together.