



MINISTRY  
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

*From the desk of*

Deputy Minister Pinky Kekana

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## NECSA WOMEN'S DAY WEBINAR

Monday, 31 August 2020

Time: 11h00 – 12h30

- Dr Namane Magau, NECSA Group Board Member
- Ms Tebogo Mothlabane, President of Women in Nuclear South Africa (WiNSA)
- Prof Mmantsae Moche Diale, SARCHI; Founding Women in Physics Ambassador
- Ms Tina Eboka, Group MD for NTP Group SOC Ltd
- Mr Ayanda Myoli, Acting Group Executive, NECSA Group
- Ladies & Gentlemen

What does the future look like?

It's an easy enough question, with a difficult answer that even the world's greatest futurists are still formulating their predictions. They all have varied viewpoints but one thing is common amongst all of the them – technology.

Technology has radically leap-frogged and positioned the world not just in the midst of the 4th industrial revolution, but the global pandemic has caused rather massive

shifts in humanity's mind-set about 4IR. Where we previously looked upon it as something that was begrudgingly happening to us, the global lockdown has caused us to embrace it as a permanent fixture of our ways of living and working.

The lockdown effect has also meant that our initial ideas of what Industry 4.0 would bring us, are not necessarily the same since Covid-19. The reason for that, is simply because the context of emerging technology and its subsequent advancements, are different, now that we live in a world of Covid, and its resultant impact.

I'm not a futurist by any means, but one of my latest predictions is that while technology will still globalise, ALL aspects of our daily lives will localize. Technology will help us, help ourselves, and will seek to never limit us, purely because there can never be an economic shutdown of this magnitude ever again.

So, that is a new prediction.

But, a previous prediction, from a speech of August 2019, when I said,

“Have you asked yourself whether your job in its current form can be automated. If it can, it's highly likely you will be impacted. Don't wait for someone to tell you your job is being impacted – make the decision to reskill yourself with skills that will allow you to participate in the economy that will be driven by technological advancements of Industry 4.0. We also know that there will be a demand for jobs that machines cannot perform, jobs that rely on intrinsic human traits and abilities such as empathy, compassion and cross-collaboration, skills often attributed to women, usually referred to as 'soft skills'. Most jobs requiring these, have women in them today. These soft skills are now referred to as 'power skills'. And these power skills all come

as a default setting to women, which means that there is no question that the 4th industrial revolution is a revolution for women.”

This, I stated in my speech of 15 August 2019, at the Topco Women Awards.

Today, as we navigate the world, one of the most critical things that leadership across all organisations has had to accelerate, has been these soft skills or power skills. Managing teams remotely, changing business strategies and processes, learning your way around online platforms whether its meetings on Zoom, or grocery shopping online – all these required a different set of skills and mindset, that we as women seemed to embrace quicker and easier than men, and I use as my reference the many articles and studies that have been done since March this year on the effects of Lockdown life.

In terms of the scourge of gender based violence that is on the increase all across the world, and especially in South Africa, online violence against women and girls was the highest form of violence committed.

We are living in a virtual society by default, and online violence has exploded, because it makes it easier for people to commit violence without almost no consequences. Women are the main targets of online harassment, an especially those with voices - like women led organisations, female journalists, and politicians. Worst are women organisations who stand up against patriarchy of some kind. Online harassment can include online bullying, trolling, cyber stalking, defamation and hate speech, public shaming, and identity theft and hacking, amongst other

offences. Then, there are the vulnerable women and girls who are not savvy about keeping themselves safe online.

Globally, the journey ahead for us to deal with all aspects of keeping our online citizens as safe as possible, is a long and complex one, with advancements in technology happening daily. Perpetrators are always ahead in utilisation of these advancements, but we have made it our duty to be one step ahead of them, in all the programmes of the entities delegated to me, whether that is the Film & Publications Board, .Zadna, or even SABC and others. Being a survivor of GBV myself, I am passionate and committed to this fight from all aspects, and organisations that stand against it, will not only always have my support, but I will lead from the front, to end GBV in our country.

Looking ahead, the 4th industrial revolution has all the makings of a revolution for women. But, only if we as women decide that we want to take advantage of the opportunities afforded. One of the biggest ways we can take advantage of the opportunities that will arise, from living in a world of advanced technology, is if we treat this current revolution as a skills revolution, and reskill ourselves to be in demand for those scarce skills.

Skills and knowledge in industry 4.0 is about ensuring that we look at our professions, our careers and the skills of the future, attached to those, and look at how we close the gaps, as the world evolves. The next 2 to 3 years will be that time for all of us to define ourselves in respect of skills of the future, for the future of work. No matter your age, your position in the hierarchy, we ALL have to be cognisant of our skills gap,

and how it relates to our future. As I mentioned earlier, women already have default soft skills or power skills, so now we have to pair that, with the skills required in our area of expertise.

For NECSA who is at the frontier of research, science, technology and innovation which is at the heart of the 4IR, this could mean so many opportunities. NECSA is a key role player in advancing energy and new materials, and the Presidential Commission on 4IR, has put forward that a “Platform for Advanced Manufacturing and New Materials” be established. NECSA’s research expertise would be key, particularly in advancing energy storage materials and technologies in order to harness solar and wind energy, amongst others.

So many opportunities, so little time. What would be the required reskilling, upskilling, cross-skilling that would need to happen? It’s a question YOU need to ask and answer.

So, on the topic of whether the 4th industrial revolution is a revolution for women - indeed, in my mind it certainly is.

I thank you.