



Republic of Mozambique
Presidency of the Republic

Women in Leadership: contributing to an equal future in a world with COVID-19

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY FILIPE JACINTO NYUSI, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, TO THE NATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE 7TH OF APRIL, THE MOZAMBICAN WOMEN'S DAY

Dear Mozambicans;

Compatriots!

On the occasion of the 7th of April, I salute the Mozambican women, from Rovuma to Maputo, from Zumbo to the Indian Ocean and in the Diaspora. Today we commemorate the day dedicated to all these compatriots of ours.

We applaud the role of Mozambican women, who with their wisdom and commitment, and on an equal footing with men, actively participate in political, economic, social and cultural life, thereby contributing to the development of the Mozambican nation.

On this occasion, we pay tribute, above all, to the bravery, dedication and contribution to the Homeland, by Mozambican women, as shown yesterday and today in their different missions.

To do justice to the motto: "**Women in Leadership: Contributing to an equal future in a world with COVID-19**". we celebrated the 7th of April in a different way, favouring activities without the usual massive presence of women in compliance with COVID-19 prevention measures, and aware of the responsibility to protect the health and lives of citizens.

Given the pandemic we are now experiencing, the Government is ensuring its continued support to women within the framework of Social Assistance Programmes, at a time when the vulnerability of families is aggravated.

Our efforts to promote balance between men and women will continue. We shall foster a balanced access to opportunities and means for national development. We shall further promote greater inclusion of women at all levels.

We know that the outcomes of this struggle are not measured only by a higher numerical representation of women. But we are aware that there is an increasing proportion of girls in the student population as a result of the expansion of the school network.

By waiving primary school fees, raising compulsory schooling to Grade 9, distributing free textbooks and improving conditions in homes and the health situation in schools, by doing all of this we are promoting greater access opportunities for girls.

By expanding access to sexual and reproductive health programmes, family planning, breast and cervical cancer screening and antiretroviral treatment and other targeted interventions, we are expanding opportunities for girls.

In the economic field, we have successful women entrepreneurs on their own merit, many of them anonymous, who in the informal sector provide food production and wealth for their families.

Every day that goes by, Mozambican women increase their participation in decision-making bodies and in professions that were once considered to be male domain, as a result of deliberate, bold public policies and actions in line with our vision for Mozambique.

These progresses are also the result of the commitment and contribution of every segment, including civil society, religious institutions, the private sector and cooperation partners, whom we salute.

Dear Mozambicans;

Compatriots!

Besides COVID-19, we celebrate the 7th of April today, at a time when we are feeling the effects of climate change in the form of Cyclones, heavy rains and prolonged drought.

We celebrate Mozambican Women's Day at a time when the country is struggling with armed violence in the Centre Region and terrorism and violent extremism in Cabo Delgado.

The greatest impact of these constraints falls on women who are the pillar of life and the pillar that supports the family and the future of our society.

Women are the ones who suffer most in times of war, they are the ones who teach us the meaning of our own humanity.

It is our mothers who educate us to reject violence, they are the ones who keep us away from the cruelty of wars. It is women who teach us the value of love, friendship and respect for others.

It is women who build us as people, with the right to have a name and a history.

All that human heritage is now being threatened by **terrorism** and the most ruthless **violation of human rights**. This is the threat we want to talk about.

Compatriots

In the last few weeks, the situation in Cabo Delgado has attracted much national and international attention, following the recent attacks by terrorists in the town of Palma. All this attention is legitimate. All this concern means that we live in a solidary world that does not stand indifferent before the suffering of others.

The town of Palma and the adjoining Afunge peninsula are in close proximity to the natural gas fields. It is in this region that the foundations are being laid for the exploitation of this resource that is so important for our economy.

The town serves as a base for the construction work and provides logistical support for the ongoing work in Afunge. In recent years, Palma has seen a rapid development in terms of infrastructure, including hotels, banks and service providers.

In turn, the Afunge peninsula is also being developed, with camps and residential areas, with access roads and an autonomous aerodrome.

On 24 March 2021, at 4pm, the terrorists burst into the Palma District Headquarters Town with gunshots, opening fire on civilian targets, some of which were properly selected.

The terrorists brutally killed, with utter disregard for human life, dozens of innocent people who were heroically working for the welfare of their families. Dozens of people were injured, both seriously and lightly.

The terrorist brutality forced hundreds of people, including men, women and children, to seek immediate refuge in the bush areas of the headquarters town of Palma District and in Afunge.

In those days filled with drama and heroism, these people faced the brutal loss of their loved ones. To escape from death, entire families threw themselves into the bush with their small children and undertook long journeys whose only certainty was fear, thirst and hunger.

To escape the inhuman cruelty of the terrorists, these people survived in conditions that none of us can even imagine.

There can be no greater barbarity, no greater crime against life and human rights than that experienced by the population in the northern districts of Cabo Delgado.

Some other people, with the help of the state, as well as state and non-state partners, had to seek safety in places far from Palma, such as Pemba.

All they managed to save was the clothes they were wearing. But they brought with them traumas that will forever scar their lives.

In addition to the human targets, the terrorists vandalised and totally or partially destroyed some local government facilities, the Palma District Attorney's Office, the Revenue Authority, the hospital, banks and public and private residences.

All this heritage belonged to the town of Palma, but it was built with the sacrifice of all the people of Mozambique.

In this operation, the FDS rescued over 500 people including men, women, pregnant women, children and new born babies. Our troops rescued these defenceless creatures at the same moment they were fighting the terrorists.

We follow these events with the most thorough detail and concern. What happened in Palma, as had happened before in other regions, was not just an attack on a village in Cabo Delgado. The aggression inflicted on us by the terrorists is against Mozambique. It is against all of us Mozambicans. Terrorism is always an aggression against the whole mankind.

We have given instructions for the population to have as much support as possible. And we have instructed the Defence and Security Forces to proceed, without much fanfare or proclamation, with operations in the town of Palma, with a view to fully re-establishing Order, Security and Tranquillity.

You already know what happened next, because the appropriate bodies have released it to the public without reservation. The terrorists were expelled from Palma.

The success we have achieved has not only happened in Palma. Once again, we do not intend to claim victory because we are aware that we are fighting against terrorism. We are facing a war

without barracks, but in this battle we reaffirm the conviction that, if we stand together, we can win.

We encourage those who were forced to flee not to lose hope. This situation is temporary. In your strength and courage we find an inspiration to continue the fight against the criminals. As a nation we have already withstood many challenges. As Mozambicans we have been able to overcome wars, we have been able to get back up after the fall and start again together on a new path.

To those who have lost their way and ended up with the terrorists, we plead them to return. We are ready to welcome them and reintegrate them back into society.

Our government has already expressed to the international community its needs to fight terrorism. This bilateral and or multilateral support is being assessed, and we know where we need help. And what is our responsibility, as Mozambicans.

Those arriving from abroad will not come to replace us. They shall come to support us. This is not a matter of empty pride. This is about a sense of sovereignty, it is about knowing that no war is won if it is not clear from the outset what is to be done by one's own country and what is to be done by the allies.

What happened in Palma is a clear example of what we can do when we are united. But what has been happening in Cabo Delgado is also a good exercise to uncover where we can and should be supported.

We want to make one message clear: we Mozambicans, united, will defeat terrorism. We Mozambicans, with the support of our friends, will defeat this threat. To this end we are upgrading our defence and security forces.

To this end, we are providing for adequate logistics. And to this end we are providing our army with training, professionalism and specialised equipment. We don't need to say much, as the successful role models have not.

What is happening in the theatre of operations around the town of Palma is an example of the fruits of this progress. There are stories of our soldiers that must be told. These young people are heroes and deserve all our affection.

But these achievements of ours are not just a military achievement. These victories are mainly the result of collaboration between the Defence and Security Forces and the local population. It was this population that gave us the valuable information that allowed us to considerably reduce the enemy's geographical scope for action and the frequency of their terrorist attacks.

In this popular support, we highlight the fighters of the national liberation struggle, who without showing any ostentation and with all their patriotism are committed to this new struggle. It is these veterans who instil courage and bravery in the young combatants of today.

Yesterday, today and tomorrow, the people, the government and the State have condemned, condemn and will always strongly condemn any and all acts of terrorism.

We vigorously condemn the aggression perpetrated by the terrorists against the rights of this population, from the right to life to the violation of the right to education, work, food and housing.

We cannot sit back while thousands of our citizens have been prevented from enjoying their most basic rights.

We want to clearly say to these compatriots: the whole of Mozambique is by your side. We shall do everything in our power to support the people affected by the violence of this cruel and inhuman war.

Mozambicans!

Respect for human rights is a cornerstone for the kind of country we are building, a country where each and every citizen should feel free and protected as a citizen.

The Mozambique Defence and Security Forces understand their noble mission to protect our citizens. The FDS are there to defend our people and our nation. All branches of our army will always be subject to the highest ethical and professional standards in the performance of their duties.

As a democratic state based on the rule of law, Mozambique invests **in the moral training and academic preparation of the men and women who are committing their precious lives in the theatre of operations to defend the lives of the population and national sovereignty.**

This training is not limited to strictly technical defence and security matters. Ethical and human training is vital for our soldiers to know that they cannot defend their homeland if they do not defend the Mozambicans, along with all the freedom and citizenship achievements.

We clearly **reiterate that human rights violations** shall not be tolerated in Mozambique. Every possible case of human rights violation will be thoroughly investigated, and appropriate action will be taken against those found guilty.

Our Defence and Security Forces believe that there should be no **dichotomy** between respect for human rights and security. Our armed forces know that no military victory can be achieved without a relationship of total trust and mutual aid with the civilian population.

Our defence and security forces are inspired by the history of the national liberation struggle and the defence of our sovereignty. This battle was successful because the combatants and the population formed a single and inseparable force.

In this sense, we are confident that, as in the past, the intense collaboration between the FDS and the population is the key that will lead us to victory against terrorism and the violation of human rights in Mozambique.

**Compatriots,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Before closing this communication, I would like to stress the following:

We have not chosen this war, it was imposed on us. We have no other option but to continue working relentlessly to restore public order and tranquillity in the affected districts. Only then can our people live in peace again.

The brutal nature of terrorist action knows no boundaries. The attacks against defenceless populations, including small children, reveal a total lack of humanism and civic values.

The aim of this violence is clear: they want to intimidate us. They want to own our fear. More than occupying a geographical space, the terrorists want to occupy our soul, by stealing hope and sowing discord.

As a government we are aware of how serious this situation is. We know the field, we often visit the combatants on the front line. We are not commanding in a remote and distant way.

It was not by chance that our armed forces quickly restored normality in Palma. And we need to emphasise the following: we are overcoming a condition arising from decades without solid investments on the defence and security sector.

Once again we state that the achievement reached in Palma cannot be understood as a proclamation of final victory. It was an important achievement, but the victory over terrorism requires permanent vigilance, and from everyone.

And it requires us to be truthful in our assessment of our own capacity. This truth has to be evident in the way we report what is happening on the ground.

We are aware that terrorism is not only an African or Mozambican phenomenon. It is a global issue. Many of those in the terrorist ranks in Cabo Delgado have been trained and ideologically instrumentalised abroad and their activities are essentially financed by illicit means and organised crime.

Developed countries with much more means than us are also victims of terrorist actions.

There are still those who associate terrorism with Islam. In fact, terrorists do not reflect the values of Islam, which are values of peace. Terrorists do not represent the Muslim community, either nationally or internationally.

The aim of this narrative against Muslims in Mozambique is to divide us, to weaken us in our common struggle. Muslims in Cabo Delgado and in the country are equally the victims of terrorist attacks and are obviously outraged by their atrocities.

International experience has taught us that the solution to the problem of terrorism takes time. Awareness and patience are fundamental. That is why we always call for serenity. I know that these words may seem empty to the thousands of victims of this war. More than grand statements, these compatriots of ours need strong actions, they need our solidarity, they need a peaceful return to their homes and their lives.

As a government, our duty is to ensure the safety of all Mozambicans and to defend our sovereignty as a nation. We are aware, however, that our response has to go well beyond the military domain.

We need to build hope, we need to bring concrete solutions without propaganda promises to the young people who need a job today to start believing in the future.

Mozambicans!

With all the information collected and consolidated on the ground, the government set up a working group (what we call a "*Task Force*"). This group comprises ministers who will immediately address the issue of IDPs in its various facets.

We have been engaging with our bilateral and multilateral partners in order to view terrorism as a global enemy that ought to be fought in a concerted manner. At our regional level, in the coming days, we will again pool our experiences to form a united front to prevent and combat terrorism.

It is in this context that we are convening the SADC Double Troika Summit for tomorrow Thursday, 8 April to assess the security situation in Mozambique. At this meeting we will jointly devise mechanisms to eradicate terrorism in the region.

The National Defence and Security Council was also convened. Its meeting was subject to background information and the availability of some members who were engaged in the field. While these steps are being taken, the Defence and Security Forces are still on the ground pursuing the terrorists moving along the neighbouring areas of Palma district.

Compatriots!

Mozambican Women!

I conclude by urging everyone, men and women, not to lose focus and to engage in the promotion of peace, solidarity and the strengthening of National Unity towards development. And here we repeat, with full belief, this truth enshrined in the following motto:

"a generation where everyone has equal opportunities, is a victorious nation".

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION ! CONGRATULATIONS MOZAMBICAN WOMEN