Let us work towards improving the status of women in our society

This week, the city joined the global community in observing the International Women's Day. This is an important day for us to reflect on the strides we have made in creating an equal society where women are able to realise their potential.

This commemoration also provides us with an opportunity to take stock of the challenges we must overcome to ensure that women occupy their rightful place in society.

We all know that COVID-19 has dealt a severe blow to the economy and women have been the hardest hit sector of the population by this pandemic. This was further highlighted by the United Nations Development Programme

study on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in South Africa released last year.

Apart from the socio-economic hardships, women also suffered a great deal of gender-based violence, particularly during the hard lockdown.

Therefore, when we engage on issues affecting women, our deliberations must be focused on addressing some of these socio-economic challenges facing women and fast track our efforts of transforming the economy so that it can serve all people.

As eThekwini Municipality we are implementing measures to ensure that women play a meaningful role in the economy. We have designed our public procurement in the manner that allows the participation of women, youth, people with disabilities and Military Veterans.

This year, we are celebrating 27 years of freedom and we must ensure that we consolidate and safeguard the gains we have achieved since 1994 including the strides we have made in elevating the status of women.

It is an undeniable fact that the status of women of today has improved significantly compared to that of our grandmothers who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956. Our councils, parliament and legislatures are well represented by women which gives us hope that by 2030 we will indeed achieve the 50/50 gender parity in all public sector institutions.

We are however concerned about the slow pace of transformation in the private sector as women continue to be overlooked in strategic positions.

Let us continue to build a strong South Africa together and be a part of the generation that will end gender inequality. Most importantly, as we revitalize our economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must also ensure that we change the economic outlook of the country and build a fundamentally different economy that improves the material conditions of women.