Good morning Ladies & Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure in welcoming you all for today's celebration of the International Women's day. I thank our esteemed Programme Director for giving us a comprehensive briefing on the International Women's Day and the journey of women led empowerment as it is playing out in India. Also my congratulations to all the ladies present here for putting together this fabulous programme. Lastly, my sincere thanks and gratitude for Hon'ble Senators, HRH Sen.Princess Ntfombiyenkhosi, Sen.Maria Dlamini, Sen.Linda Nxumalo and Sen.Lorraine Nxumalo for honoring us by accepting our invitation and gracing this occasion. A very happy International Women's Day to everyone.

2. It is also a happy coincidence that today also happens to be Mahashivaratri. Mahashivratri which is celebrated as the wedding day of Indian gods Shiva and Parvati is also a symbol of women empowerment. This is best symbolised by the idol of Ardhanareeshwara which itself means half man and half woman coming together to form Eeshwar or the divinity. Shiva embodies Purusha or man and Parvati embodies Shakti. It is symbolic of the coming together of dual energies of man and woman which ultimately reside in a supreme power. A happy Mahashivratri to all.

3. I would also like to take this opportunity to brief our diaspora brothers and sisters about the Chalo India campaign launched by our Hon'ble Prime Minister yesterday. You would no doubt have been following the live links circulated in this regard. Basically it is an invitation for everyone to visit India and enables our diaspora to become Incredible India Ambassadors. In this regard, we have a short video explaining the concept. Let us all hear what our Prime Minister has to say.

Thanks everyone and once again a very Happy International Women's Day and Mahashivratri to everyone.