

## “I was Born to be a Leader”

### UNODC speaks with Major General Sylvia Ledwaba, Head of the Serious Organised Crime Component, Directorate of Priority Crime Investigations, South Africa

In recognition of International Women’s Day on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2021, the UNODC’s Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSAF) spoke with an inspirational figure in women’s leadership, Major General Sylvia Ledwaba. Ledwaba serves as Head of the Serious Organised Crime Component, Directorate of Priority Crime Investigations (DPCI or ‘Hawks’) in South Africa, a law enforcement body of the South African government responsible for the combating, investigation and prevention of national priority crimes such as organized crime, commercial crime and corruption.



*Major General Sylvia Ledwaba, DPCI*

The DPCI and UNODC jointly plan priority activities based on the UNODC mandate and DPCI objectives for South Africa. “I cannot do it alone and they are great partners. The UNODC brings the international strategic component to our projects on the national level” Gen. Ledwaba said of her relationship with the UNODC, who assist the DPCI in their work on trans-national organized crime, including trafficking of endangered species, human trafficking, narcotics, and violent crimes.

Prior to her appointment as Head of the Serious Organised Crime Component, of the DPCI, Gen. Ledwaba enjoyed a long and impressive career in law enforcement. From her initial training as a police constable in July 1985, she continued to study and pursue self-development, rising through the ranks of the police service, ultimately earning the rank of Major General. Since then, Gen. Ledwaba has overseen the implementation of new strategies for the organization, applying her 35 years of experience to a vitally-important organization in her home country. Throughout her time as Head of the DPCI, Gen. Ledwaba believes that, while managing a large number of investigations is always challenging, her greatest success has been the coordination of South

Africa's nine provincial DPCI departments in achieving their strategic goals while maintaining organizational integrity.



*Interview with Major General Sylvia Ledwaba, March 9th, 2021*

As a trailblazer for women's leadership in the male-dominated field of crime prevention, Gen. Ledwaba explained, "I was the first woman ever in my position, but I was born to be a leader - and my track record always spoke for itself. Whenever there was a difficult task or investigation to complete, (my superiors) knew to give it to Sylvia." Reflecting on the lack of women role models in law enforcement to inspire her own career journey, Gen. Ledwaba embraces the role of mentor to young women aspiring to become future leaders in male-dominated sectors. "You have to be self-disciplined, self-motivated and stay focused on your goals. As a woman in this field, you are not only leading police officers, but you are also leading your family. I want young women to look at me and say 'That's the type of leader I want to be.'"

In the years ahead, DPCI aims to continue successful pursuit of its mandate by directing further focus towards the illicit mining and trafficking in precious metals in South Africa and abroad. Speaking to the ongoing cooperation with UNODC, Gen. Ledwaba closed the interview by stating, "I don't have enough words to say how much I appreciate the UNODC. We both see the way forward, and see ourselves making progress. I feel their commitment, and we can go far together."