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Directorate of Information and Communication

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AU Commissioner Abou-Zeid soft launches African Network for Women in Infrastructure (ANWI)



Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, 16 April 2019: African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid today hosted a dialogue in Cairo to soft launch the African Network for Women in Infrastructure (ANWI) - a new initiative aimed at promoting African women’s participation in infrastructure development at the national, regional, and global levels.

Held on the sidelines of the Second Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee meeting on Investment in gender-responsive sustainable infrastructure is critical event, dubbed “Promoting inclusion and participation of women along the infrastructure Value Chains” facilitated an open debate to guide the establishment of ANWI and enabled stakeholders initiate the process of scoping the vision and structure of the network.

At the event, Commissioner Abou-Zeid said “while this is a side event, integrating policy and planning that prioritizes women and hardwires gender is not a side agenda”.

“The second phase of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) is currently being designed, which will provide a valuable opportunity to proactively integrate women’s participation at the country, RECs and partnerships level,” the Commissioner said. She urged all stakeholders to providing infrastructure services in a professional and gender-sensitive manner, which recognizes each resident including women as a valuable client.

“The goal of the ANWI is therefore to provide a high level strategic engagement platform that will bring all stakeholders together for ensuring a gender responsive planning and implementation of infrastructure,” the Commissioner underscored.

She highlighted that a full programme of events will be held this year, with a formal launch of the Network planned for November 2019.

On her part, speaking on behalf of the President of Egypt's National Council for Women (NCW), Dr. Message Point from Dr Nagla Al Adly, Director of International Cooperation shared Egypt’s experience in women empowerment.

“Egypt has committed to increasing women’s participation in all sectors for an inclusive economic growth process. There are 10 female Ministers in key positions who are leaders and policy makers. Egypt is also addressing inclusive poverty reduction by promoting access to housing and ensuring that everyone has access to economic opportunities in all sectors,” Dr. Al Adly stated.

Also delivering the keynote address, the Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Chair of the Sub-Committee on Tourism, H.E. Minister, Senator Prisca Mupfumira emphasized that the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) focused on the need to promoting women’s participation and ensuring that gender equality is central to all programmes.

She further called upon partners to establish a special fund at the AUC, which is dedicated to support gender responsive activities and will ensure that there is high level impact in support of empowering women in Africa

The opening session was followed by an-hour long panel discussion where panelists were invited to elaborate about the state of infrastructure gender imbalance in Africa and asked to help shape the future direction of the Network.

According to the panelists, the role of women and the gender dimensions in infrastructure remains marginal, despite the fact that Africa has made significant progress towards gender equality and protection of women’s rights at the policy level.



African Union Commission Director for Infrastructure and Energy, Mr. Cheikh Bedda noted that recognizing the significant gap in women’s participation in the African infrastructure development agenda, the designing of the second phase of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) is expected to address pressing needs of women along the infrastructure value chains.

“Under the PIDA PAP 2 umbrella, the AUC and its partners will enhance gender responsiveness in the planning, design and implementation of infrastructure projects on the continent, through provision of appropriate gender sensitive project selection criteria and tools to undertake this activity,” Mr. Bedda stated.

On her part, African Union Commission Director for Women, Gender and Development, Ms. Mahawa Kaba Wheeler said, “we are convinced, the evidence is there and the connection between women and economic growth is extraordinarily powerful.”

She used the discussions to encourage all delegates attending the STC on Energy, Transport and Tourism to commit to action and deliver results for the improvement and enhancement of the lives of 600 million ordinary African women.

The Director of the GIZ AU Office, Dr. Inge Baumgartner emphasized the need to integrate the Network into existing PIDA initiatives and instruments.

“But, to achieve that, international partners must harmonize and align programmes and coordinate under the PIDA framework,” Dr. Baumgartner said.

The fourth panellist, Dr. Zeinab El-Bakri former Vice President of the African Development Bank reiterated that the second phase of PIDA also provides a strong platform for public private partnership and promoting sustainability through an inclusive approach in all PIDA and specifically corridor approach.

Comments from the floor also covered the positive opportunities that come when women are given wider access and equal opportunity in the development of infrastructure.

The side event discussions were underpinned by key coalesce around the transformational role of women in infrastructure development to unlock long term game-changing impact in the continent.

The discussions were moderated by Dr. Sunita Pitamber, Former Director of Human Capital Development Department at the African Development Bank.

With over 200 participants in attendance, the event served as a soft launch for the African Women in Infrastructure Network (AWIN). The initiative was developed by the African Union Commission and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) with the support of the Government of Germany, through GIZ. The Network should provide a platform for strategic advocacy, capacity building and networking aimed at enhancing the implementation of PIDA.

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