

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### **Uganda Marks Major Milestone as African Union advocates for Women-Led Industrial Parks Under the African Women in Processing (AWIP) Initiative**



The African Union Commission (AUC), in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Uganda, celebrated a landmark achievement in the implementation of the African Women in Processing (AWIP) Initiative, as Uganda announced major progress toward establishing its first Women-Led Industrial Parks. This milestone was highlighted during the Fourth African Women in Processing Forum (AWIP Forum), held on the margins of Africa Industrialization Week 2025.

Uganda becomes the first AU Member State to fully domesticate the AWIP Initiative by integrating it into national industrial development policy and allocating land for ten (10) dedicated women-led Special Economic Zones, in line with the African Union's Policy for Establishing a Viable SME Business Ecosystem in Africa leveraging Special Economic Zones (SEZs), which calls for a structural shift from outdated enclave-style special economic zones to modern, inclusive, decentralized and SME-driven industrial ecosystems. This milestone positions the country as a frontrunner in building inclusive and competitive regional value chains and implementing this policy.

Speaking at the high-level opening ceremony of the 4th AWIP Forum, H.E. Francisca Tatchouop Belobe, Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals (ETTİM), highlighted the continental significance of Uganda's leadership. She

recalled that AWIP was established as a flagship initiative following the 17th Extraordinary AU Summit on Industrialization and Economic Diversification (Niamey, 2022), where Heads of State mandated the AUC to institutionalize AWIP as the flagship continental platform to address persistent gender gaps in Africa's industrialization agenda.

In her words, "Women constitute over 60 percent of the workforce in agro-processing, textiles, cosmetics and food value-addition sectors, yet women-inclusive industrial parks remain below 15 percent across the continent," the Commissioner noted.

"Uganda's allocation of land for women-led Special Economic Zones represents a practical step toward domestication of AU industrialization policies and sets a strong example for inclusive industrial transformation across the continent". She also called on other Member States to emulate this example.

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Building on the Commissioner's continental framing, Mrs Elizabeth Kasenene, the President of the African Women in Processing (AWIP) Uganda Chapter brought the focus to the national level, highlighting the structural barriers that have long constrained women entrepreneurs and reaffirmed that the AWIP industrial park model offers a practical solution by providing subsidized certified factory spaces, shared processing facilities, financial instruments, and structured production clusters linked to guaranteed offtake agreements.

She celebrated the Government of Uganda's endorsement as a breakthrough, stating that it signals the country's readiness into an era where women stand at the centre of production, innovation, and industrial transformation.

The AWIP Uganda model is expected to drive job creation, enhance value addition, strengthen local supply chains and position women-owned enterprises as key actors in the AfCFTA marketplace.

The African Union Commission commended the Government of Uganda for its leadership and reaffirmed the continued support of the AUC, Regional Economic Communities, development partners and the private sector in ensuring the full operationalization of AWIP industrial parks across the continent.

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