

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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OAFLAD's Commitment to Build Resilience: Moving Beyond Emergency Response

The Organization of African First Ladies for Development (OAFLAD) successfully convened its 30th Ordinary General Assembly under the theme: “*Building Resilience for Women and Girls: Climate, Conflict, and Sustainable Futures*,”. The First Ladies’ gathering held from 11 to 15 February 2026, at the AU Headquarters, concluded with a renewed continental commitment for placing women and girls at the centre of resilience building, policy responses, and sustainable solutions.

H.E. Ambassador Amma A. Twom-Amoah, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development of the African Union Commission underscored the importance of empowering women and girls to adapt, recover, and thrive. Her message strongly linked to the African Union’s Theme of the Year on ensuring sustainable water and sanitation systems, she noted that water insecurity is a major driver of gender inequality, affecting education, safety, health and livelihoods.

The Commissioner invited the First Ladies to champion three priorities: First, to work closely with the AUC to address health and social vulnerabilities exacerbated by climate change, displacement, and conflict. Second, to ensure women and girls are placed at the Centre of resilience-building, governance, and recovery frameworks, not as beneficiaries, but as leaders and decision-makers. Third, to support the national rollout of the *Building Resilience Campaign*, a strategic platform to mobilize communities, institutions, and political leadership around gender-responsive climate action and social protection.

In her welcoming remark, H.E. Mrs. Zinash Tayachew, First Lady of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia said that women are the backbone of Africa in driving household economies, contributing up to 80% of agricultural work, raising future generations, and preserving cultural heritage; making their empowerment essential to the continent’s progress. She reported that over the past six years, the Office of the First Lady of the FDRE has advanced the mission by building 37 secondary schools to expand educational access and by providing women with vocational training, workspaces, resources, and start-up capital that enable them to generate income and transform their families’ lives. She highlighted that such initiatives strengthen women’s

resilience and free them from traditional constraints, reaffirming the truth of the African proverb, *“To educate a woman is to educate a nation”*. Showcasing women’s vital role in Ethiopia’s Green Legacy campaign, Mrs. Tayachew said: “Africa’s success depends on creating conditions where women can lead, and First Ladies bear a significant responsibility in championing this effort.”

H.E. Dr. Fatima Maada Bio, First Lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone and then President of OAFLAD, commended the organization’s evolution into a powerful and credible voice shaping policy, driving partnerships, and delivering meaningful impact across Africa. On the other hand, she underscored, significant challenges such as poverty, inequality, health gaps, climate threats, and emerging social issues remain urgent. Drawing inspiration from Wangari Maathai, H.E. Dr. Bio said: “ we are reminded that the environmental destruction of today burdens future generations, this Assembly renews its resolve to build a continent of opportunity rather than obstacles. United as women, mothers, and leaders, we reaffirm our commitment to securing a healthier, equitable, and sustainable future for all African children.”

One of the defining moments of the Open Session of the 30th Ordinary General Assembly was the official induction of new active members into the largest platform uniting African First Ladies. It was a symbolic moment the President of OAFLAD, H.E. Dr. Fatima Maada Bio, and Vice President, H.E. Mrs. Ana Dias Lourenço, First Lady of Angola, formally welcomed their fellow First Ladies, Mrs. Zita OLIGUI NGUEMA, Gabon; H.E. Mrs. Marie Khone Faye from Senegal; H.E. Mrs. Katumu Yatta Boakai, from Liberia, and H.E. Mrs. Lordina Mahama from Ghana, and the First Gentleman of Namibia, H.E. General Epaphras Denga Ndaitwah through the presentation of membership certificates.

The 30th Ordinary General Assembly of OAFLAD marked the official launch of OAFLAD’s activities under the theme.

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