

AFRICAN UNION

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Opening remarks by

H.E. Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa

Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission

On the occasion of the

10th Anniversary of the Women for Africa Foundation

“Women Building Bridges: Proposals from the South for Global Change”

Madrid, Spain

19-20 May 2022

- **Your Majesty, The Queen Letizia**
- **H.E. Pedro Sánchez, President of the Government of Spain**
- **H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of Liberia, African Women Leaders Networks (AWLN) Patron**
- **H.E. María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, President of the Fundación Mujeres por África (FMA)**
- **H.E. Graça Machel, Founder of the Graça Machel Trust and the Foundation for Community Development**
- **Ricardo Mairal, Dean of the UNED**
- **Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning to you all!

Buenos días a todos!

It is an honor and a real pleasure for me to be here with you in this beautiful city of Madrid to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Women for Africa Foundation. The theme that brings us together today ***"Women Building Bridges: Proposals from the South for Global Change"*** demonstrates the urgency of amplifying and coordinating our actions to accelerate Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Africa and around the world.

I would like to thank Her Majesty Letizia Ortiz Rocasolano, Queen of Spain for gracing this occasion with her presence. Allow me to also sincerely thank FMA President – H.E. María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, for inviting me to this

important gathering, and the Embassy of Spain in Addis Ababa for their contribution to making my visit to Madrid a memorable one.

I will also take the liberty to express my appreciation to H.E. María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, who in her capacity as former Deputy Prime Minister of Spain, established in 2007 the Spanish Fund for the Empowerment of African Women. This Fund has made positive, measurable social and environmental impact on African women.

Your Majesty,

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenges the world has had to face, of recent, such as pandemics, wars, acts of terrorism, environmental disasters, and many others, continue to teach us that;

1. These challenges have a disproportionate negative effect on women and girls.
2. The importance and pressing need to coordinate our efforts and work together to solve our common challenges is again and again vindicated.
3. The role of leadership, and more so, of female leadership, in innovating solutions around the challenges cannot be overemphasized.

I therefore believe that this important conference of Women Leaders is fundamental to addressing the global challenges facing women in our different contexts.

Your Majesty,

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is ready to shape her destiny while welcoming partnership aligned to her vision and aspirations. Aspiration 6 of the African Union Agenda 2063 speaks about ‘An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.’

Gender parity remains high on the agenda of the African Union and a prerequisite for the success of our mission. We have achieved parity in the top leadership of the African Union Commission and are cascading this down and across other organs of the Union. We are also implementing the 35% representation for our youth.

The African Union Commission is also mandated, and has deployed its programs, to coordinate the domestication of women and youth empowerment and inclusion policies in all our 55 Member States. The role of the private sector in this endeavor has been articulated and institutionalized by establishing the Africa Business Council, whose pioneer Chairperson is our sister, Dr Amany Asfour. The same has happened for the Civil Society players coordinated under African Union ECOSOCC.

The women, peace and security agenda is one of the success stories African Union has to offer, under the able advocacy leadership of the Envoy of the Chairperson

on Women, Peace and Security, another sister, Madame Bineta Diop, which role we are now institutionalizing as a permanent office under the Chairperson of the Commission.

If I might share yet another important commitment, this would be the African Women's Decade for Financial and Economic Inclusion 2020-2030 that the Assembly of Heads of State and Government has declared in February 2020, just few days before COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Today, I am coordinating **WYFEI 2030**- Women and Youth Financial and Economic Inclusion initiative to deliver on this Decade. WYFEI 2030 is a **10 Action Points** framework, with three dimensions (personal, systems and environment) designed to coordinate a comprehensive effort not only for African women, but also for our youth, thereby aiming to reach 75% of Africa's 1.3 billion population with meaningful, transformative initiatives including but not limited to, employment, unlocking financial products and services, government procurement, policy and regulation, access to productive resources such as land and technology, addressing time poverty through burden sharing and easing, to name but a few. It is a coordinating mechanism to drive delivery in partnership with our Member States, private sector, civil society and international partners, with women and youth themselves at the center, while the African Union Commission plays an **ABCDE** role- **A**dvocay, **B**rokerage, **C**atalyzing action, **D**emonstrating and documenting, and **E**ngaging for collective impact.

It is in this line that I invite you all to join us in the coming few weeks as we launch WYFEI 2030 initiative and henceforth converge our respective competitive advantages to implement priority areas therein.

Your Majesty,

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, I have no doubt that the roadmap that we will develop during these two days will be our framework for action and consultation around the priorities and the outcomes sought around gender equality and women's empowerment. On this note, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the African Union Commission to continue engaging and partnering with women leaders across the globe to implement our common goals of gender equality and women's empowerment. No woman and young girl should be left behind and as leaders, it is in our hands to make a difference.

I wish you many constructive exchanges in the coming two days.

Thank you for your attention.

Muchas gracias!