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Opening Remarks for Agenda 2063 Media Awards

AWiM Conference

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Distinguished colleagues from the media, representatives from the Diplomatic corps, development partners, AWIM media partners and sponsors

I am speaking to you on behalf of my Director, Ms Leslie Richer.

My message today is very simple. It is one of congratulations and solidarity.

Today, we are gathered in this virtual space, as African women in the media and the communications sector, to see how we can continue the noble work of producing and disseminating content that informs, educates, and in some cases, entertains.

The narrative around Africa is changing and we as women in the media are at the center of that change. The past two days have pointed to tremendous strides in the way we work and the impact we have.

Our pens, keyboards, and microphones are at the center of that change.

We are busting the myths stereotypes about ourselves.

We are unearthing an Africa that many seem eager to continue to see as backward.

We are awakening the world to the might and potential of this great continent.

We are telling with pride, the stories of our forebears and of present generations.

We are creating and sharing knowledge about ourselves as media women and about the communities in which we live.

We are uplifting other women whose contributions to society would otherwise have been hidden.

We are in print, on radio, on TV and online.

We are adopting new technologies to enhance our work and increase our reach.

We are ideating, creating and co creating rich and diversified content.

We are challenging each other to do better.

We are learning, re learning and sharpening our skills.

We are resilient and passionate about our jobs.

We continue to shine the torch in dark spaces, sometimes even in our own newsrooms and our working conditions.

We are telling more and more of our own stories ourselves, no longer waiting for copy to arrive from far away lands.

And this in spite of many challenges, both in the workplace and in society.

I believe that this year we had over 500 subscribers and would like to believe that this is an indication that our partnership with AWiM is doing something right.

For this and more, we ought to congratulate ourselves.

In one panel discussion I attended, a participant commented that she had benefitted from, and been strengthened by knowing that she was not alone in the issues that challenged her. This is the value of initiatives such as this.

Media are central to the achievement of the goals of Agenda 2063, which is Africa's 50-year development framework. The African Union has partnered with AWiM in this project for three years now, to see how we can advance the narratives of African women, and also how we can enhance the already great role that women journalists are playing in defining and re telling the African narrative. Our focus on women in the media is not a coincidence. Women make up half the world. Women journalists tell the stories of women in society and the economy, they uplift and give visibility to other women, and highlight their contribution to development. This goal is very much aligned with the AU Strategy on Gender Equality and Empowerment, the Constitutive Act of the AU, and the African Women's Decade of Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment, among others.

We also heard, over the past two days, of the challenges African women in the media face. We heard from research outcomes that showed that the newsroom is still male dominated, that women journalists do not have equal access to resources, and that harassment and gendered role allocation are still prevalent, among many other barriers to progress. These are challenges we must continue to tackle.

The African Union is proud to have partnered in these awards in support of African women in the media. A lot of work went into the preparations for this day. I will end by congratulating the winners of this year's Agenda 2063 African Women in Media Awards.

I thank you