

**PAN-AFRICAN FORUM ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN
RESPONSE TO THE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS**

**CAIRO PLATFORM FOR ACTION
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN AFRICA**

DRAFT

Cairo, October 29, 2009

PREAMBLE

WE, representatives of Governments, Workers' and Employers' Organizations, Educational and Research institutions, Associations of Women Entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs' Support agencies, funding agencies and bilateral and multilateral organizations ,

MEETING in Cairo from 27 to 29 October 2009, at the invitation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in partnership with the African Development Bank (ADB), and under the patronage of H. E., Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt,

AFTER listening to keynote addresses from Mr. Charles Dan the ILO Regional Director for Africa, H. E. Mrs Suzanne Mubarak (presented by the Minister of Manpower and Migration Mrs. Aisha Abdel Hady), the Message from the President of African Development Bank Mr. Donald Kaberuka as well as welcoming remarks by the AfDB Representative in Egypt, Mr. Khushhal Chand Khushiram, and representatives of Workers' and Employers' organisations. As he highlighted in his message for the forum: ' women represent over half of our population, are working hard, perhaps hardest of all, still many of their contributions are invisible and their voices are muted by inequality. Yet the potential dynamism of their enterprises and the wealth generated is what Africa need. '

Taking into account, on one hand, contributions on:

Promoting growth-oriented and sustainable women's enterprises;Monitoring the impact of women's entrepreneurship development and;

artnering for women's entrepreneurship development in Africa.

And, the conclusions of consultations and deliberations of nine panels on:

- The enabling environment for the development of women's entrepreneurship,
- Access to finance for women's businesses,

- Linking women's entrepreneurship development to growth drivers,
- Impact indicators for women's entrepreneurship development,
- Enhancing the effectiveness of development programs for women entrepreneurs,
- Increasing the success of strategies and programmes for women's entrepreneurship development
- Enhancing government's support for women's entrepreneurship development,
- Enhancing the development of networks of women entrepreneurs in Africa,
- Expanding donor support to women's entrepreneurship development in Africa.

I - THE FINDINGS

HAVE established the following findings:

1.1 The global financial crisis will undoubtedly leave lasting impact in Africa, worsening poverty and undermining the achievement of Millennium Development Goals. "x

1.2. In Africa, women and youth are those who bear the heaviest burden of the harmful consequences of the current crisis.

1.3. In Africa the role of women as drivers of socio-economic development must be emphasized, although they face many gender-based constraints for the initiation and development of sustainable enterprises. Among these constraints are:

- Difficult access to financing for the establishment and growth of their enterprises due to, among others, attitudes of lenders and lack of collateral,

- Limited access to and application of information on business opportunities at all levels due to inadequate availability and dissemination of information

- lack of database of qualified human resources within the workers' and employers' organisations to help the growth of women's entrepreneurship at the national and regional levels
- Lack of promotion of trade unions in women entrepreneurs' businesses, which would help promote decent work

- Taxation and fiscal regulations that do not take into account the different needs of women,

- Socio-cultural norms that lead to limited land and property ownership, and inhibit the full enjoyment of women's universal rights as well as contributing to sex discrimination,
- Procedures for creating and registering businesses are complex and time consuming for women entrepreneurs, who are time and information poor,
- The educational levels of women can mean they have inadequate technical and business skills to start and grow sustainable enterprises,
- The lack of data, especially sex-disaggregated as well as the lack of accurate statistics to guide effective policy and programme in support for women entrepreneurs,

1.4. Despite some successes, women continue to be underrepresented in political and socio-economic decision-making at national, regional and international levels.

1.5. Professional organizations of women entrepreneurs, where they exist, struggle to be heard among mainstream decision-making bodies.

1.6. To respond more effectively to crises and challenges of the Millennium Development Goals, micro, small and medium enterprises are the potential pulse of economic growth and the fight against poverty through their contribution towards creating decent jobs and sustainable incomes.

1.7. The emergence of a new generation of women entrepreneurs who own competitive medium and large enterprises is welcomed.

1.8. Despite the economic crisis, studies conducted by ILO and AfDB have shown that many small and medium enterprises initiated and managed by women have proved to be resilient and more efficient economically, environmentally and socially.

1.9. Under the leadership of the ILO Director General, Mr Juan Somavia, the international community has welcomed the Decent Work Agenda, the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the Global Jobs Pact – the latter adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2009 – as appropriate policy frameworks to respond to the job crisis and chronic underemployment and unemployment faced particularly by developing countries.

1.10 The AfDB strongly believes in fostering women's economic empowerment and women entrepreneurship mainstreaming as tools to mitigate the crisis and sustain development in Africa. Those focus areas were outlined by the Bank's updated Gender Plan of Action (2009-2011). It is within that framework that the Bank is committed to intervene through its African Women in Business (AWIB) initiative as well as through its crisis response, the Trade Finance Initiative and the Emergency Liquidity Facility in Particular.

II - THE PLATFORM OF ACTION FOR ILO, AfDB, Social Partners and participating organisations.

Arising from the above, the Pan-African Forum on Women's Entrepreneurship Development proposes to ADOPT the following platform of action for the development of women's entrepreneurship in Africa, structured around four objectives.

Nationally

2.3. Objective 3: Establish and strengthen institutional and legislative environment with incentives and support for the implementation of effective policies and strategies to enhance women's entrepreneurship development and generate decent employment and sustainable incomes.

Programmatic Focus

- Elaborate and implement national policies for women's entrepreneurship development with a clear definition of different categories of enterprises on the basis of objective and harmonized criteria.
- Promote and encourage social dialogue between workers and employers as a means of improving the enterprise culture.
- Create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs and their enterprises.

- Establish an institutional and legal framework in consultation with the social partners, involving the participation of social partners, which promotes Women's entrepreneurship Development and gender equality, in accordance with the 2009 ILC Conclusions on Gender Equality and the 2007 Conclusions of the Promotion of Sustainable Enterprises.
- Implement fiscal policies that take into the account gender-based needs of women entrepreneurs.
- Integrate entrepreneurship education in educational systems to encourage the emergence of entrepreneurship, particularly among young women and men.
- Promote the development and delivery of quality, accessible business development services for women entrepreneurs in both urban and rural areas.
- Promote sustainable financial products and services targeting the needs of women entrepreneurs.

Regional level

2.2. Objective 2: Integrate women's entrepreneurship development into regional policies and strategies for Africa

Programmatic Focus

- Elaborate and implement harmonized policies for the free flows of goods and services to traders, especially women entrepreneurs, to take advantage of sub-regional and regional markets.
- Mainstream women's entrepreneurship development and affirmative actions in regional development strategies in accordance with the guidelines of the Ouagadougou Plan of Action for employment and poverty alleviation, with particular reference to the economic empowerment of women.
- Establish Regional Observatories for collecting, analyzing and disseminating reliable quantitative and qualitative gender disaggregated data on economic and enterprise activities in the sub-regional areas.
- Facilitate regional trading, for example through the organization of periodic trade fairs, exhibitions and regional meetings to share information and experiences on women's entrepreneurship development.

Support the engagement of regional economic communities (RECs) in the promotion of Women's Entrepreneurship Development and harmonise cross border migration laws and procedures.

Establish a regional platform for women entrepreneurs' associations to support networking and promote projects and programmes in women's entrepreneurship development in Africa.

Internationally

2.1. Objective 1: Mobilize the donor community (bilateral and multilateral), UN agencies and international finance institutions to mainstream to integrate women's entrepreneurship development in their programmes and policies of technical cooperation and support women-specific development initiatives.

Programmatic Focus

- Lobby governments and parliaments of donor countries for increased interest, attention and resources for women's entrepreneurship in their policies and programs of development assistance.
- Promote women's entrepreneurship development in Africa on the agenda of international conferences and meetings on strategies for economic development, eradication of poverty and social exclusion and creation of wealth.
- Mobilize financial and technological resources in support of programs for the development of women's entrepreneurship in Africa, with particular emphasis on South-South

cooperation and appropriate and successfully tried and tested North-South initiatives, such as AGOA and other fair trade initiatives.

- Secure financial support for research programs and dissemination of their results on women's entrepreneurship, particularly on best practices of successful women
- Create linkages between women entrepreneurs and Global Compact, in particular Green Jobs initiatives related to corporate social responsibility.
- Facilitate the efficient use of new information technologies by African countries, associations of women entrepreneurs and their members.
- Prioritize systemic approaches to women's entrepreneurship development focusing on growth-oriented sectors, and the provision of technical assistance to meet quality standards in markets, finance, etc.
- Support reforms in the business environment in Africa, particularly policy, legal, regulatory and administrative provisions that impede women's potential to fulfill their potential as entrepreneurs.

Internationally

2.1. Objective 1: Mobilize the donor community (bilateral and multilateral), UN agencies and international finance institutions to integrate women's entrepreneurship in their programs and policies of technical cooperation.

Programmatic Focus

- Lobby governments and parliaments of donor countries for increased interest, attention and resources for women's entrepreneurship in their policies and programs of development assistance.
- Include the promotion of women's entrepreneurship in Africa on the agenda of international conferences and meetings on strategies for economic development, eradication of poverty and social exclusion.
- Mobilization of financial and technological resources in support of programs for the development of women's entrepreneurship in Africa, with particular emphasis on South-South cooperation and appropriate and successfully tried and tested initiatives.
- Financial support for research programs and dissemination of their results on women's entrepreneurship, particularly on best practices of successful women entrepreneurs.
- Facilitate the efficient use of new information technologies by African countries, associations of women entrepreneurs and their members.

- Prioritize systemic approaches to women's entrepreneurship development focusing on growth-oriented sectors, and the provision of technical assistance to meet quality standards in markets, finance, etc.
- Support reforms in the business environment in Africa, particularly policy, legal, regulatory and administrative provisions that impede women's potential to fulfill their potential as entrepreneurs.

At the level of the women entrepreneurs

2.4. Objective 4: Strengthen organizational and managerial capacities of women entrepreneurs and their representative associations to effectively lobby and advocate for the needs of their members and advocate for equality between women and men..

Programmatic Focus

- Developing of technical skills, entrepreneurial and managerial skills of women entrepreneurs and potential young female entrepreneurs.
- Recognise and serve the needs of a diversity of women entrepreneurs
- promote social protection within women's enterprises.
- promote the trade union culture within enterprises to enhance productivity and the growth of sustainable enterprises
- Strengthen the capacity of Employers' and Workers' Organisations to provide appropriate services to women entrepreneurs and support women entrepreneurs' associations
- Developing and / or adapt training tools and support to women entrepreneurs, for example, the ILO's tools for enterprise development in general and in particular for the development of women's businesses should be widely available and used in African countries in the main national languages.
- Strengthen women entrepreneurs' organizational frameworks, such as representative associations, to enable them to effectively access networks and strategic decision-making bodies, in particular strengthening their links to Employers' Organisations.
- Use of information technology to exchange information and experiences on best practices and business opportunities for women entrepreneurs.
- Promote and use of existing networks for information exchange on national, regional and international levels.
- Create strategic partnerships and mutual support between women entrepreneurs and other entrepreneurs, at local, national, regional and international levels.
- promote and disseminate success stories and women entrepreneurs as role models.

IN CONCLUSION, the Forum hereby

LAUNCHES an urgent appeal to governments, donors, Agencies of the United Nations System, the social partners, International Financing Institutions, Regional Economic Communities and the private sector to support and contribute to this Platform of Action and play a key role in its effective implementation.

URGES the International Labour Organization and the African Development Bank to continue their technical collaboration and financial mobilization and support, and engage a wider range of development partners, for the following strategic actions:

- Institutionalize the holding of this Forum on bi-annual basis and sub-regional annual meeting of women entrepreneurs;
- Establish a Women's Entrepreneurship Facility for Africa (WEFA) to mobilize and pool contributions from key support agencies, and match these to the articulated needs and demands of governments and others at the national or regional levels in line with key elements of international aid policies;
- Establish a Pan-African Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism for women's entrepreneurship development;
- Contribute to publications that report on the dynamics of women entrepreneurship in Africa, consistent with the theme of this Platform for Actions;
- Establish Excellence Awards for Best Contributions to support of women's entrepreneurship development at the national, regional and continental levels.
- Assess and establish an interactive website at the Pan-African level for exchange between institutions and organizations working to promote women's entrepreneurship in Africa, in particular institutions of research and teaching.

REQUEST the Donor community, including a specific request to the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) to

- a) assess the effectiveness of various forms of Women's Entrepreneurship Development support
- b) scale up effective interventions by contributing to the Women's Entrepreneurship Facility for Africa
- c) support a multi-agency platform, coordinated by the ILO and AfDB: the Women's Entrepreneurship Facility for Africa (WEFA)", that will function inter alia as a coordinator, knowledge manager, synergy creator and generator of "big ideas" that: address high-growth sectors; improve the enabling environment for WED; and the need for data on women entrepreneurs' economic contribution, etc.

- d) convene a Pan-African donor roundtable to identify effective interventions and pledge financial contributions and technical support to WEFA.
- e) Establish a Challenge Fund to encourage and respond to innovative and sustainable approaches to women's entrepreneurship development.

Cairo, October 29, 2009