

Message from Donald Kaberuka,
President of the African Development Bank

Women entrepreneurs' participation in African economies is essential. We are working together for their empowerment. They are working for Africa's future.

Africa aspires to becoming more competitive and to have a dynamic economy. This means enabling our entrepreneurs. It cannot be possible without more dynamic women entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs face difficulties at all stages from conceiving, growing and expanding their businesses. Business women in general face more hurdles than men do; partly because stereotypes exist, family considerations get in the way of business decisions and perceptions are not changing fast enough.

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 needs.

Success in entrepreneurship depends of course on many factors. First and foremost, it depends on the individual's motivation and capacity to identify an opportunity and pursue it, a function of innovation and a competitive spirit. But it also depends on a number of external factors, which together constitute what we call the "business environment". The African Development Bank's work in this area focuses on the promotion of a conducive business climate across the continent, through specific programs geared at improving institutions in fields that have an impact on entrepreneurship.

The Bank strongly believes in fostering women entrepreneurship as a tool for economic growth. It is within that framework that the Bank is committed to assist, among other ways, in the promotion of gender equality and women entrepreneurship mainstreaming in Africa 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.** We want to see this initiative grow and attain its objectives of promoting business women. I wish the conference much success.

Donald Kaberuka
President, African Development Bank