



African Women Economic Summit

Investing in Women Differently

Summit Communique

Nairobi, March 19th and 20th March, 2010

The African Women's Economic Summit, held in Nairobi on the 19th and the 20th of March 2010, at the initiative of New Faces and New Voices network, in partnership with the African Development Bank, resulted in the following conclusions and actions.

For Africa to succeed and compete in the global economy, and reach the growth rates required to achieve the millennium development goals, it needs to bring women centre stage in the financial sector.

As we re-think Africa's financial system in response to a global call for financial sector reform and rising protectionism, we must draw on the potential of women as leaders in finance and business, and as a growing and profitable market for financial services. Moreover, building more inclusive financial systems that reach women will lead to more businesses and increased income levels for women and Africans, in general.

The time is now to finance women-owned businesses. The time is now to ensure women have access to affordable and appropriate financial services. The time is now to groom women as leaders in the financial sector. Africa will be successful if we achieve this.

The Summit agreed to two bold goals:

- Massively increase the access of women to a variety of financial services
- Fast track women's leadership in the financial sector

To achieve this, the Summit participants agreed to collectively address the following:

- An enabling environment that will lead to inclusive financial systems that meet the financial needs of women
- Governance and leadership that will bring about change in the financial sector with respect to women and finance
- Establish and identify platforms to make sure Africa and African women's voices are heard with respect to the discussions and decision on global financial sector reforms
- Economic integration through-out Africa to create bigger markets for Africa's goods and services, to facilitate the flow of finance and capital, and creating economic opportunities for women

The following actions, in the short to medium-term are proposed:

- Launch a fund to finance innovations in finance for women

- Engage Ministers of Finance, Governors of Central Banks, and CEOs of major banks in Africa to become « drivers of change »
- Establish national and sub-regional networks of women in finance to drive this agenda forward
- Put women on the G20 agenda on access to finance
- Ensure availability of information and data to make financial markets work for women
- Encourage regional bodies to build inclusive financial systems for women as a priority
- Strengthen the voice of African professional organizations of women entrepreneurs, women in business and women in finance

The Summit participants made specific pledges that will be followed up by NFNV and agreed to meet again in two years time. These pledges are summarized in Annex 1.

The Summit participants thanked Mrs. Graca Machel and Dr. Donald Kaberuka for making Summit possible. And special thanks went to the African Development Bank for its commitment and partnership in ensuring women take centre stage in the financial sector.

Annex 1

Summary of Actions and Pledges made at the African Women's Economic Summit: Investing Differently in Women

African Development Bank Pledges:

- Hold a Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Forum as a side event at the upcoming Bank's General Annual Meetings in May 2010 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; with the goal of raising greater awareness and deepening commitments among policy makers;
- Continue to provide technical and financial support to the African Women's Economic Summit;
- Ensure that the operationalization of the proposed Africa Guarantee Fund (AGF) , with a total commitment of USD 300 million, is accelerated; the main goal of the AGF is to increase African SMEs long-term finance and capacity-building with loan guarantee products.
- Strengthen the mainstreaming of gender equality in Bank's programming;
- Submit the conclusions of this summit to the next meetings of the Committee of Ten (C10) and the heads of multilateral development banks.
- Increase the number of professional women joining the Bank and in top managerial positions.

Other Development Finance Institutions

- IFC to target 25 % of its lending portfolio to reach women.
- NFNV to become a member in its own right of the Global Banking Alliance.
- Increase Gender mainstreaming in projects and programmes, e.g. measure trade results, report on women in business.
- Assist with research, that would be accessed via a portal, that will map and track all the various initiatives on women in finance in Africa. ILO and IFC will start this effort.
- Support an initiative to celebrate the leadership of women in financial sector.
- Use WEF as a platform to raise issues on women in finance. Initially at the WEF Africa meetings in Tanzania (5-7 May 2010), and from that to follow up at Davos in 2011.
- ILO will extend support to NFNV in a number of areas to be agreed, around training, initiative to celebrate leadership of women in the financial sector, as well as research and mapping of efforts in this area.

- Support NFNV membership of the African Unity Caucus, with 40 member organisations.

Financial Institutions:

- ABSA will increase lending to women in Small Business by 10% in respect of volume and value from current baseline.
- Standard Bank will increase home-loan and secured lending to women by 10% from the current base, and by 25% in the unsecured lending space. They are also committed to mentoring women at different levels within the bank to ensure their career growth.
- Other financial institutions at the Summit made pledges on the following themes:
 - Launch new financial products targeted at women.
 - Increase provision of financial services to women.
 - Find innovative ways to address collateral.
 - Implement programmes to develop financial literacy/education for women.
 - Engage on social and cultural impediments for the advancement of women within financial institutions.

Regulators and Policy Makers :

- Create a task force with support of NFNV and AfDB to identify legal and policy impediments to access of women to finance
- Identify initiatives for a public campaign on financial education for women
- Review options to assist women to seek careers in the financial sector, and identify and support promising women.
- Identify mechanism (e.g. Leadership Award) to celebrate leadership of women in the financial sector

Expanding the work of New Faces, New Voices

NFNV should focus on **Advocacy, Knowledge Sharing and Networking** in support of women's access to finance. These efforts should address increased access to finance in terms of availability of products, appropriateness of these products in meeting demand, and affordability, as well as financial literacy. NFNV efforts should raise the issues on capacity and process of financial institutions in meeting the needs of women as retail users of finance and business users.

To address this, some of the following areas of focus for advocacy, knowledge sharing and networking were identified:

- Women leadership in financial institutions and intermediaries
- Capacity building for financial institutions and development finance institutions in this area
- Monitoring change. Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA) agreed to fund a monitoring framework, and fast track implementation of pledges made at the Africa Women's Economic Summit, March 2010.
- Tripartite alliances between SMME's, development institutions (DFIs and donors) & financial institutions
- Capacity building for DFI's themselves (including better governance and monitoring functions)
- Leadership awards for banks making a difference

The participants agreed on a number of immediate actions to establish country task teams and expand the structure of NFNV.