



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

REMARKS BY HON. LUCIA IIPUMBU

MINISTER OF INDUSTRIALISATION AND TRADE

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE AFRICA WOMEN TRADE
CONFERENCE (#AWTC2022)**

28TH - 29TH SEPTEMBER 2022

VENUE: ROCKVIEW HOTEL,

ABUJA, NIGERIA

Hon. Mariam Yalwaji Katagum – Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment

All Hon. Ministers here present

Ms. Frida Owinga -President, OWIT International and all OWIT Presidents from other countries

Distinguished Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Members of the Media

Good Morning to you all,

Let me use this opportunity to thank the Organisation of Women in International Trade (OWIT) Nigeria for the invitation and hosting us at this crucial event. I further want to appreciate you all for attending the 2nd Series of this event under the theme **“Positioning African Women for the Next Big Opportunity in the Regional and Global Marketplace”**. It is indeed an absolute pleasure for me to address you all this Morning.

Allow me at the onset to duly appreciate the Organisation of Women in International Trade in its quest for assisting women to develop, harness and take advantage of available trade opportunities. I am aware that this organisation has its membership comprising of women and men who has an ultimate aim to share knowledge, mentor their peers and youth, connecting with counterparts in other countries such as Zimbabwe and Kenya, and exchanging business contacts and referrals. It is our utmost hope that after this event, we cement relationships and establish a sister organisation in Namibia.

My task this morning is to highlight on the aspects related to women and trade from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region perspective. You will all agree with me that trade has significantly improved the living standards of many people across the globe and has further become the main mean of survival for various individuals majority of whom are women. Indeed trade has huge potential to generate income, create employment and improve welfare in general. The COVID - 19 pandemic and other global phenomenon have revealed that trade can be seriously disrupted. There is a risk that some of the economic gains women have reaped through trade could be reversed by these uninvited occurrences. It is therefore imperative to forge cooperation and collaborations at platforms such as this one to deliberate on the conditions needed for a fast recovery and to create those for more inclusive and sustainable trade in the future.

One of SADC's main objectives is to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development. The regional body further aims to alleviate poverty with the ultimate objective of its eradication, enhance the standard of living and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration. It is a well-

known fact that women are the backbone of many economies and play key roles in the economies of each SADC Member State. Evidence has also revealed that women constitute more than 50% of the poor population in SADC and poverty can only be addressed through programmes, which specifically target the majority of the poor.

To date SADC has seen improvements in terms of the development of gender policies, structures, guidelines, action plans and programmes. These are geared towards addressing gender inequities and raising awareness on gender equality, gender analysis and mainstreaming at both national and regional levels. Despite these efforts, implementation still falls short of the stated commitments and those improvements may face emerging threats such as increasing poverty, HIV/AIDS and escalating levels of gender based violence and human trafficking in the region.

For a variety of reasons, inequalities exist between women and men throughout the SADC region and to a large extent the African continent. Women constitute the majority of the poor in the region for a number of reasons including high illiteracy rates, restrictive and discriminatory laws, traditional practices, and limited access to, and control over, productive resources. By recognising and eliminating gender inequalities there is great potential for women to act as a powerful resource for development on the entire African continent.

Consistent with the SADC Gender Programme, SADC has developed a Women's Economic Empowerment Framework as a step towards developing and implementing a regional women's economic empowerment programme. In 2019, SADC adopted the Regional Multi - Dimensional Women's Economic Empowerment Programme 2020 - 2030 (RMDWEEP) to promote women's economic empowerment and gender-responsive development in order to contribute to social inclusion and justice. The RMDWEEP aims to coordinate, support implementation, monitor and evaluate regional commitments on women's economic empowerment by SADC Member States.

Furthermore, the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020 – 2030 draws impetus from the organisation's Vision 2050, which envisages “a peaceful, inclusive, competitive, middle - to high-income industrialised region, where all citizens enjoy sustainable economic well-being, justice, and freedom”. In RISDP 2020 – 2030, cross-cutting issues including Gender mainstreaming are central to ensuring that the formulation, deliberation, adoption, and implementation of regional protocols, strategies, policies, and programmes are undertaken in an inclusive manner.

Women play a key role in trade especially in key sectors such as agriculture including the informal economy in the SADC yet they face enormous challenges, which hinder their full trade potentials. The regional community is therefore committed to removing all forms of gender inequalities at the regional

and national levels through a series of goals and actions derived from legally binding international, continental and regional instruments.

It is true that women and trade aims to shed light on areas of trade policy that has received relatively little attention and on its surface, trade policy is gender-neutral. However, a closer look at the gender dimension of trade policies reveals important differences in how trade policies affect gender parity and even in how those policies affect different groups of women. In the informal sector, for example, lockdown measures led to a large number of disruptions in Namibia as activities came to a standstill. Women hold a disproportionate number of jobs in various vulnerable sectors.

Financial inclusion is another component, which is linked to both economic growth and poverty eradication. It enables people to participate in the economy, and therefore to trade. It is necessary for business growth and is an important mechanism for converting the informal to the formal. Small businesses, which are more likely to have a lack of access to credit for example, will be the growth engines for intra-African trade – especially in a digital era. But this only works if they are financially included.

Similarly, formality is important to trade as businesses need access to trade finance and other financial products to support international trade. For informal cross-border traders, access to finance can support traders to improve and expand their businesses. Formality also assists in data collection, improving understanding of the effects of trade and possible interventions.

At this juncture, allow me to thank the AfCFTA Secretariat for undertaking preparatory work towards the negotiations and development of the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade. The Protocol is expected to address the specific constraints and barriers women face when trading on the continent. It will create an environment that allows women to utilise the AfCFTA by accessing wider markets, improving their competitiveness, and participating in regional value chains. For women to take advantage of opportunities offered by the AfCFTA Agreement, they must have the capacity to access financial products and other factors of production to build and scale up their businesses in order to meet the demands of an AfCFTA market.

Let me therefore implore up on all of us to use this platform offered by the Organisation of Women in International Trade (OWIT) Nigeria on Women and Trade to emerge with concrete actions with clear indicators of success. It is time to be deliberate and be intentional in our approach for implementation of policies and programmes that enable women to leverage on available trade opportunities and to become masters of their own destinies.

I thank you.