



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR
ON WOMEN RIGHTS

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**SPEECH BY HON. HARRIETTE CHIGGAI, PRESIDENTS' WOMEN RIGHTS
ADVISOR DURING THE 9TH AWAK LADIES' LEADERSHIP AND
ACCOUNTABILITY CONFERENCE ON 5TH MARCH 2024 AT SAROVA
WHITESANDS BEACH AND RESORT, MOMBASA.**

Topic: "Essentials for Effective and Impactful Leadership"

- **CPA Isabel Juma, Chairlady, AWAK**
- **AWAK Board Members,**
- **CPA Perpetua Bulemi, CEO AWAK**
- **Distinguished Delegates and phenomenon ladies in the room**

Honored Guests, Esteemed Leaders, and Champions of Change,

Good morning

Happy Women's Week and International Women Day in advance.

1. As we gather here at the stunning Sarova Whitesands Beach Resort for the 9th AWAK Ladies' Leadership and Accountability Conference, we are surrounded by the beauty of our natural world and the collective power of determined women leaders. Allow me to commend AWAK

for such a well-organized event which offers a platform for us ladies to converge and deliberate on the challenges, experiences, visions and achievements that continue to shape women leadership in the country and in the region. This setting is a testament to what we can achieve when we blend vision with action.

2. I am here today, not just as an Advisor to the presidency but as a fellow advocate, to delve into the topic **"Essentials for Effective and Impactful Leadership" with this year's International Women's Day theme, "Inspire Inclusion"**.
3. Leadership is a crucial aspect of personal, professional, or corporate success. It involves the ability to offer guidance, inspiration, and bring out the best in others. In our quest for leadership that leaves indelible marks and raises benchmarks, we must first acknowledge the bedrock of all progress: inclusivity.
4. Inclusivity is not just a concept; it is the lifeblood of transformative leadership. It is the recognition that diverse voices not only deserve to be heard but that they are essential for robust decision-making and innovative solutions. An inclusive leader does not just open doors; they dismantle the very barriers that necessitate such doors. An inclusive leader must prepare for transformative change, mentor upcoming young leaders to be better than themselves and ensure proper succession planning.

5. The theme for International Women's Day, is **Inspire Inclusion**. Often, the leaders we remember the most are the ones who inspire us to take action or to better ourselves and make an impact. To be inspirational in this way is a goal many leaders dream of achieving, yet it's not a skill that comes naturally to those who try. When we inspire others to understand and value women's inclusion, we forge a better world. And when women themselves are inspired to be included, there's a sense of belonging, relevance, and empowerment. I am glad that we are deliberating on this at such a time as now.
6. So, what constitutes the essentials of this brand of leadership? It begins with a vision that sees beyond the immediate horizon to the potential of what could be. It's about the courage to champion initiatives that may not benefit one directly but will uplift the entire community. Women leaders across the globe exemplify this: when they thrive, economies grow, societies become more stable, and the world moves closer to equality.

It is important to note that **“each time a woman stands up for herself, she stands up for all women”**.

7. Can we Lead without purposeful empowerment ?

Economic empowerment and investment is our rallying call because when a woman becomes an economic force, the fabric of society is strengthened.

Economic empowerment and investment of women is more than a goal; it is the very engine of societal

transformation. When we empower a woman economically, we empower a family, and in turn, we empower a community.

Women empowerment is multi-dimensional: it spans from education to entrepreneurship, from access to assets to participation in the labor market. It is about dismantling systemic barriers that prevent women from owning property, accessing credit, or starting businesses. It is about creating policies that support women in the workforce, including fair wages, maternity leave, and protection against discrimination.

Economic empowerment is about equipping women with the skills and confidence to walk through investment doors. Consider the story of a woman in rural Kenya who, with access to a small loan, transforms her modest stall into a thriving marketplace, or the narrative of a young girl who, through educational scholarships, becomes the first in her family to attend university and later leads a successful tech startup. These are not just individual success stories; they are testaments to what can be achieved when economic empowerment is realized.

Take note of the Government projects across the country in building modern markets for cottage industries. What role are professionals playing in ensuring that these projects are a success? We must remove our suits and go to the ground to educate, enlighten and empower the rural women with the right skills within the value chains. We as professionals must do this!

8. Turning to gender parity accelerators, Gender parity is not just an ideal; it's a pragmatic accelerator for socioeconomic growth. It is not enough to desire parity; we must architect environments where women's economic participation is a given, not an exception.

We look at initiatives specifically designed to fast-track gender equality. Gender parity accelerator is not merely a policy but a catalyst that propels us toward a future where women have equal opportunity in all spheres of life.

This means equal pay for equal work, representation in leadership roles across all sectors, and the elimination of gender bias in recruitment, retention, and promotion. It involves setting tangible targets, measuring progress, and holding ourselves accountable.

What kind of policies do we have in our institutions to support women cutting across all ages, young mothers, care givers, those going through menopause?

In the realms of public and private sectors adopting gender parity accelerators, we see a commitment to systemic change. This is not just about meeting quotas but about rewriting the rules of the game.

When public institutions lead by example and enact policies that ensure women's participation at all levels, they set a standard for society. When private companies adopt these accelerators, they not only contribute to a

more just society but also tap into a wealth of untapped potential that can drive innovation and profitability.

9. We must unpack the myth on bankability of women with the understanding that financial institutions are not just gatekeepers but are, in fact, powerful enablers of women's economic empowerment and investment. By ensuring women have access to finance, we acknowledge their role as economic agents of change. The multiplier effect of this bankability is profound: invest in a woman, and you invest in a family, a community and the nation at large.

Bankability delves into the transformational impact of financial inclusion for women. It is about recognizing women as formidable economic players. It is about the young entrepreneur who, with access to microfinance, turns her vision into a profitable enterprise that creates job opportunities. It is about the farmer who, through a loan, is able to increase her yield and thus her market reach. These examples show the ripple effect of bankability; when one woman's economic status improves, she invests in her children's education, health, and the overall well-being of her community.

Our office spearheaded the launch of the AFAWA Series in Kenya, a product sponsored by the Africa Guarantee Fund and the Africa Development Bank, with the aim of ensuring that all banks that sign into the Series have a key component for financial inclusion for women.

10. Accounting and audit sectors have a critical role to play in this journey. They are the gatekeepers of transparency and accountability, the lenses through which we can assess the effectiveness of our economic empowerment efforts. By focusing on gender-disaggregated data, they can highlight where investment in women yields the most significant returns. They can advocate for financial literacy programs tailored for women, ensuring that financial empowerment is not just about access to funds but also about the knowledge to manage and grow those funds effectively.
11. In banking and finance, the call for initiatives tailored to women is a call for innovation and foresight. These sectors have the power to reshape economies, and they must leverage this power to serve not just a segment but the entirety of society.

Women-centric financial products, services that understand the life cycles of women, and programs that support women-led enterprises are not just good ethics; they are good economics. When a bank designs a loan product that accounts for the seasonal nature of women's businesses, or when a fintech company creates an app that helps women manage their finances and grow their savings, these are more than services; they are lifelines.

12. Each of these areas — economic empowerment, gender parity accelerators, the roles of public and private sectors, bankability, and the responsibilities of the accounting and audit sectors — are not isolated elements. They are interconnected, each feeding into the other, creating a robust ecosystem where women's

leadership and participation are not just welcomed but are foundations to success. This is the essence of effective and impactful leadership: the ability to create a vision that is inclusive, a strategy that is intersectional, and a legacy that is indelible.

13. His Excellency, The President's support to women leadership and inclusion, has been demonstrated by the establishment of the office of the Women's Rights Advisor, the Office of the Security Advisor (both Cabinet Level appointments), a third of representation in Cabinet and appointment of Principal Secretaries which in the history of this country had been a dream to be realized . The president has pronounced himself severally on the support for women in leadership with the recent pronouncement in Homa Bay that if any county has an opportunity to elect women leaders, they should not waste that opportunity.

This is a recognition of a powerful truth: there is immense political goodwill to support women's ascent to leadership. This political goodwill is a resource we must harness, a current we must ride to push for systemic change.

As we move forward, let us remember that effective leadership is as much about character as it is about strategy. It demands integrity, empathy, resilience, and the ability to inspire and empower those we lead. It involves making tough decisions that may not always be popular but are always in service of the greater good. It's about being able to stand firm in one's values while also

being adaptable to the ever-changing dynamics of the world.

14. In conclusion, to inspire inclusion is to live it. We must embody the principles of effective leadership in every action we take. Let our leadership be the kind that is remembered not just for the positions we held but for the paths we paved, the voices we amplified, and the lives we uplifted. This conference is not just a gathering; it is a confluence of potential and possibility. Let's pledge to move beyond dialogue to action, from potential to realization, and from dreams to tangible achievements.

I hope these help and will empower you to look for leadership qualities in yourself and others. Be the Inspiration someone else is looking for and not the deterrent of someone's future and progression!

Thank you.

Thank you and God Bless you.

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PRESIDENTS' WOMEN RIGHTS ADVISOR
