



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

Keynote Address for Africa Shared Value & ESG Summit 2024 High Level Event.

THEME: “Empowering Africa’s Future: Shaping the Next Generation of Responsible Businesses”

TOPIC: GENDER TRANSFORMATION **RE-IMAGINED:** EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR INDUSTRY LEADERS

DATE: 24th October, 2024

VENUE: Radisson Blu, Upper Hill Hotel, Nairobi

TIME: 10.30am to 12.00pm

Salutations

Namhla Mniki-Mangaliso, Representing the Office of the President of South Africa

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Allow me to acknowledge all the private sector players in the room for making the 2024 Africa Shared Value and ESG Summit a reality. I congratulate all of you in this room for pushing the envelope in terms of the kind of conversations we must have to spur economic growth on our continent.
2. From where I stand, shaping responsible business means having women in mind from the conception of the business idea, throughout the growth of the business. In the previous session a young girl, Daphne echoed these sentiments by saying we need to do more and be intentional about where girls are when it comes to digital inclusion in business.

3. As we hold this high level discussion titled **“Gender transformation re-imagined: Effective strategies for Industry leaders”**, I believe most, if not all of us agree with me when I say that beyond sustainable businesses we need to also focus on being responsible to the realities that we face as a continent.
4. The old Africa adage- it takes a village to raise a child, should now read that it takes a village to raise an economy. Don’t you agree?
5. Businesses that not only support the economy of our African countries but also ensure the largest consumers of their product and the ones in the lower levels of the chain - women, are supported.
6. In Kenya, and I believe it is true elsewhere, the Private Sector is the highest employer. We also know that the Government is not in the business of manufacturing and therefore there is a lot that the Private Sector contributes to the economy. I am saying all these to remind us that for Africa to accelerate gender parity, it is critical that we re-imagine the way we do business.
7. How can we infuse care work, more empathy to some of the most hardworking employees in your fold-women? How do we ensure that our policies at the workplace take cognisance of women’s reproductive responsibilities? I know companies like the East Africa Breweries Limited and Safaricom have pushed the envelope here but how are the rest of us doing? There is a study that will be released after this session having a gender lens on business, and I am looking forward to seeing the results.
8. How do we ensure that women’s health within the private health insurance industry is a high priority? If I take the example of private health insurance, you will realise that while the highest number of their clientele is female, issues such as menopause, hormonal replacement therapy or just family planning commodities are not covered. So I always ask myself, why are insurances like this? Isn’t it time health insurance companies reimaged their businesses and the services they provide for women? It’s about time we reimaged products that speak to the nuances of women.

9. I hope some of these conversations and more will happen not only in this session but throughout the Summit.
10. We are here today to re-imagine how best to serve women in our businesses. A while back women needed collateral to access loans in banks, but now banks have no choice but to serve women because we have seen that women actually payback when they borrow, they are unlikely to default. Given that research is telling us this, can banks do better for women? Women are very loyal when a brand works for them. If you are not serving your most loyal client, who are you serving?
11. Kenya's Government is providing access to credit for women in different spheres through the Hustler Fund, Women Enterprise Fund, among others. We have seen the growth of small and medium enterprises. Can you imagine if banks did the same on a large scale, how would Africa's economies look like? It is a no brainer that when women have money they make sound decisions for their families health as well as education. In Rwanda and Malawi, children from female-headed households were healthier than children from male-headed households-even when the male-headed household had higher incomes. Need I say more?
12. We are here to dream and think and ask ourselves hard questions of what is working and what is not working. We are here to turn what seem like impossible tasks - like trusting women with money, to a possible task of saying wait a minute, why not? We are here to ask ourselves how we can push the needle further to ensure that women can own property and big assets in their businesses.
13. We are here to see how the Private Sector can do what the Government has done through AGPO. How can the industry players here diversify supply chains to procure goods and services from women and youth-owned businesses, thus increasing market access and ensuring sustainability? I know some of you are doing that, but how do we continue being deliberate on this across the board?
14. Some of the structural inequalities that exist in society also play out in businesses and leave women out. These need to be addressed to help

accelerate gender parity and to push Africa to an economy that is vibrant and that can meet the world's Sustainable Development Goals.

15. The African Union Gender Economic agenda should not only be the Bible for Governments but it should also be part and parcel of the Private Sector reference book.
16. Africa's population is quite youthful but it is also female. How can we leverage that as a Private Sector?
17. I know, I have asked many questions but am happy that the answers are right here in this session and this summit.
18. Ladies and gentlemen, I know we have one hour to discuss this and many other thoughts but I want to leave you with this quote by Vera Wang, a famous fashion designer: “ **success isn't about the end result, it's about what you learn along the way.**”
19. For the industry players in the room, what are you learning about women in your business? What are you willing to learn and do differently? President Barack Obama once said that you cannot play while half of your players are on the bench. Ladies and gentlemen are women sitting on the bench when you are making decisions or are in the room helping shape ideas on issues that make sense to them.
20. I know, I have asked many questions but am happy that the people with the answers are right here in this session and this summit.
21. I wish you all great deliberations. As a Government we are happy to support the Private Sector for the benefit of our people.

Thank you.

**Hon. Harriette Chiggai,
President's Advisor on Women's Rights**