

# HIGH-LEVEL LUNCHEON ON BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN A CHANGING ENERGY VALUE CHAIN IN AFRICA



Photography by Timothy Shitagwa

## LUNCHEON MEETING REPORT

UN Environment Headquarters, Nairobi  
19 September 2018

**UN ENVIRONMENT HIGH-LEVEL LUNCHEON ON BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR WOMEN IN A CHANGING ENERGY VALUE CHAIN IN AFRICA**

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# THE LUNCHEON

The UN Environment's Africa Office and Private Sector Unit of Governance Affairs Office, as well as Gender and Safeguards Unit organized a High-Level luncheon on: "Business Opportunities for Women in a Changing Energy Value Chain in Africa" during the Seventh Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) which was held from the 17-19 September 2018 at the UN Environment Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The luncheon was held during the ministerial segment of this Seventh Special Session, under the auspices of the African Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework (AWEEF), on 19 September 2018.

AWEEF was conceived following decisions at the 16th session of the African Ministerial Conference which took place in Libreville, Gabon in June 2017. AWEEF serves as a vehicle and platform to enable African women to play a pivotal role as change agents and decision makers in the sustainable energy sector. It helps expand these opportunities and bring all necessary stakeholders to the table for impactful change.

The aim of the luncheon was to enhance private sector engagement in implementing innovative environmental solutions in the areas of skills, knowledge, technology and finance to empower women in the energy sector. The results of these discussions were meant to feed into the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) to be held March 2019 in Nairobi as well as Africa's common approach for engagement in the assembly that is themed: "Turning Environmental Policies into Action through Innovative Solutions".

About 100 participants including over 30 Environment Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Women entrepreneurs, representatives from African Union, NEPAD, Regional Economic communities, private sectors, banks, civil societies, NGOs, among others participated in this meeting.

AMCEN and UN Environment used this meeting as a vehicle to engage private sectors and banks to play a vital role in creating business opportunities for women in the energy sector. The results of this meeting will be built on at UNEA 4 in the context of "Innovative Environmental Solutions towards the objective of empowering African women entrepreneurs in the energy value chain". This is in line with AWEEF's mandate to create sustainable and impactful change.

### Major Issues Discussed:

- Clear, coherent and effective policy measures required to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;
- Barriers that women face in access to energy, finance and market;
- Role of the private sector and financial institutions like banks in creating business opportunities for women entrepreneurs;
- Promising solutions that can address women's energy needs;
- UN Environment, through AWEEF's, support at regional and national level.

In order to commit the inclusion of women and play a role as change agents, and decision makers governments agreed to deviate from business as usual scenario and get a paradigm shift by providing innovative environmental solutions. These include: (i) Investing and promoting clean energy and energy efficiency; (ii) Innovative financing schemes; (iii) education, knowledge and technical and business skill development; (iv) technology development and transfer; (v) policy harmonization, institutional and legal measures as well as reforms. These solutions will address issues such as land, environment degradation, pollution, social inequality or changes in legislation.



# 1. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LUNCHEON

## 1.1

### Opening Session of the Luncheon

The main moderator of the luncheon, Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis, Director Governance Affairs Office- UN Environment provided welcoming remarks to the participants and expressed his appreciation to the organizers and partners for making this luncheon possible.



**Mr. Jorge Laguna-Celis, Director Governance Affairs Office- UN Environment**

Ms. Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director- UN Environment, later officially opened the luncheon and reiterated UN Environment’s commitment towards promoting women’s entrepreneurship, decent work, and productive use of sustainable energy. “Women are the backbone of so many households on the continent and empowering women entrepreneurs is vital for improving socio-economic development



**Ms. Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director- UN Environment**

of a country”, she said. Additionally, she mentioned that conclusions from this luncheon will feed into preparations for the next UN Environment Assembly and its outcomes.

Various ministers and country dignitaries from Egypt, Sierra Leone, Congo Brazzaville, South Africa, D.R. Congo, Chad, Benin, Madagascar, Somalia, Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Uganda, amongst others gave a highlight on AMCEN’s decision during the June 2017 meeting in Gabon to empower African

women in the energy sector through AWEEF. They commended AWEEF's initiative in its aggressive progress and thus clarified the role of African governments to ensure "clear, coherent and effective policies" so as to create enabling environments for women entrepreneurs.



**H.E. Dr. Yasmine Fouad, Minister of Environmental Affairs Egypt**

H.E. Dr. Yasmine Fouad, Minister of Environmental Affairs Egypt called upon African governments to honour the Gabon decision and commit to create enabling and conducive environment to attract the private sector. This, she explained, is with a view that private sectors will bring knowledge, skill and finance. "In order to start thinking about the different aspects of the private sector we need to also discuss how to start building these opportunities throughout our countries", she reiterated.



*"Africa is the least polluter on earth but we are at the forefront of innovation. This is because of women entrepreneurs."*

**- H.E. Madame Arlette SOUDAN, Minister of Tourism and Leisure, Congo Brazzaville**



*"I think it is no longer a question of a woman wanting to participate. It is about the willingness of people to get involved with her."*

**- H.E. Madame Fatma Zohra REGHIS, Minister of Environment and Renewable Energies-Algeria**



*"The development of the sustainable energy sector in Africa will be limited if women do not take an active role."*

**-H.E. Ms. Barbara Thomson, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs South Africa**

## 1.2 Key note reflections from Women Entrepreneurs and CEOs

Ms. Esther Muiruri, Director Agri-Business Equity Bank, mentioned that women participation in business and access to credit facilities from Equity bank is an empowerment process that will see an overall improvement of women's involvement in their own as well as the country's economic and social destiny. "The role of women in the socio-economic and political development in Kenya has been acknowledged", she said. She also said that Equity Bank will open three new branches in Nairobi to serve women only under a 5 billion Kenyan Shillings programme with the UNDP. The aim is to increase financial aid to women entrepreneurs within the next 5 years.



Ms. Esther Muiruri, Director Agri-Business Equity Bank

Ms. Aminata Dumbuya, an AWEEF member and award winning entrepreneur for the West African Forum for Climate & Clean Energy Financing (WAFCCCE-3) awards gave a brief highlight on her "Masada Waste Transformers" project. She mentioned that the Masada Waste Transformers business plan was recognised as the best in the competition, after pitching for an investment of \$25 million which will be used to roll-out a network of decentralized waste to value installations across Freetown, Sierra Leone.



Ms. Aminata Dumbuya, AWEEF Member from Sierra Leone

Aminata said, "Together with The Waste Transformers, we have gone on a long journey in order to bring us this far. Sierra Leone has experienced a rapid increase in energy demand in recent years while simultaneously grappling with problems that resulted from Ebola to growing waste volumes and increased need for an intelligent reapplication of our natural resources. The socially inclusive, innovative approach we have developed provides effective solutions to both challenges".

Ms. Diana Mbogo of Millennium Engineers, a woman entrepreneur from Tanzania expressed her idea stating that the whole continent should learn from best practices and integrate their different programs for a more wholesome sustainable development. Speaking on behalf of all the AWEEF members she recognized that (i) AWEEF can facilitate the working together with different countries and; (ii) AWEEF can be a vehicle to this integration. She also indicated that women should be able to acquire appropriate technical and business skills to learn the right technology suitable to that specific country. She urged not to send energy equipment and appliances to those areas that are not adaptable to that region. She mentioned that AWEEF could help in monitoring and evaluating of the disbursement of right technologies and businesses.



**Ms. Diana Mbogo, AWEEF Member from Tanzania**

Ms. Theresa Sekamana, an AWEEF member from Rwanda, mentioned that one of the innovative environmental solutions from a policy perspective to advance Women empowerment in energy sector is to develop a harmonized policy that cross cuts various sectorial ministries (Energy, Environment, Agriculture, Finance, Industry etc). Further there is a need for governments to look for ways in which women will be at the decision-making level regarding energy issues.



**Ms. Theresa Sekamana an AWEEF member from Rwanda**

In a similar vein Ms. Gilda Monjane an AWEEF member from Mozambique stated that since energy poverty affects greater percentage of people in rural areas, there should be policies on ground concentrated on rural electrification by supporting and launching out more last mile distributors of which women could play a vital role. As a result of this and many more, access to finance should be available to all women entrepreneurs across the energy value chain. Thus if we really want to descend



the energy poverty ladder in Africa, attention should be channeled to last mile distribution. In this regard we will achieve three great milestones which are women empowerment, energy poverty eradication and women inclusive participation in the sustainable energy sector.



Ms. Gilda Monjane an AWEEF member from Mozambique

## 2. OUTPUT AND WAY FORWARD

Key outputs of the meeting:

- Recognized the important decisions recently made by AMCEN Ministers on “Investing in Innovative Environmental Solution to accelerate the SDGs and the AU Agenda 2063 implementation in Africa” including launching of “Africa Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework (AWEEF)” during the UN Environment Assembly in December 2017.
- Recognized AWEEF as a vehicle and platform to provide exciting future for women in Africa by tapping into their potential as entrepreneurs and the next big wave of growth for the continent: sustainable energy.
- Countries agreed to develop and strengthen gender responsive harmonized policies and strong institutional and infrastructural capacities that are crucial to increase private sector investments.
- Commercial banks (e.g. Equity bank) and private sector players (e.g. Liter Lighting) agreed to (i) build technical and business skills in innovative energy solutions (ii) develop entrepreneurial capacity for women clients, and (iii) avail finances and access to markets that are key to unleash greater return on investments, make economies grow and expand emission reduction opportunities.
- Women entrepreneurs urged governments to create enabling environment: (i) to attract private sector (through public private partnership) that have the potential to offer many opportunities for women to formally participate in the sector; (ii) acquire access to finance from financial institutions.

### 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, Regional Director of Africa- UN Environment concluded the meeting by saying that AMCEN and UN Environment will use this meeting as a vehicle to engage private the sector and banks to play a vital role in creating business opportunities for women in energy sector. She reiterated that the results of this meeting will be built on at UNEA 4 in the context of innovative environmental solutions towards the objective of empowering African women entrepreneurs in the energy value chain. This is in line with AWEEF's mandate to create sustainable and impactful change.



Ms. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, Regional Director of Africa- UN Environment

As a way forward, the meeting recommended:

- AWEEF together with member states, partners, the private sector, and civil society organizations to promote integrated approaches and create innovative social, economic and environmental solutions towards the objective of achieving the global and continental development agendas (SDG 2030, Paris Agreement 2015 and AU Agenda 2063).
- Key output of the meeting to contribute to further work including the fourth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 4).
- NEPAD recommended to anchor AWEEF into the African Environmental Partnership Platform that will be launched on 20 September 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya
- Immediately after the meeting, AWEEF secretariat and representatives of women entrepreneurs from Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Kenya have identified concrete projects and discussed ways and mechanisms for developing the project concepts, including resource mobilization and implementation under AWEEF's framework.

