

CWEIC Webinar - Women in Leadership: Africa – Tuesday 1st December 2020

The Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC) was delighted to host a leading group of African businesswomen during today's webinar to highlight excellence in female leadership across Africa.

Africa is home to many strong and accomplished women leaders and become, in a few years, the first continent for female entrepreneurship. In Africa, 27% of women create businesses - the highest rate globally. African countries are leading by example. In Rwanda, for example, 50% of the Cabinet are women.

The global pandemic has exposed critical gender gaps in ways that provide us with important opportunities to forge a new future. Even before the pandemic, African women's contributions to their countries' socioeconomic development were undervalued, although they constitute 72% of the agricultural labour force, 70% of the informal sector and over 70% of the frontline health care workforce. These women are vital to the economic recovery, in addition to the leadership role women are playing all over Africa as they lead their countries through a period of great change and development.

Supported by 100 Women in Finance, the Woman of the Future Programme, the Government of Rwanda and The Queen's Commonwealth Trust, the webinar interviewed leading women in business from across Africa who spoke about the challenges they have faced and the change needed to create the conditions for more women to thrive at the highest levels of commerce and industry.

The session was led by **The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary- General who said:** "Profit margins and investment returns are all higher at institutions with more women in leadership. So, it is not only the right thing to do, but makes business and economic sense to have women participate in leadership and decision-making roles."

Folorunso Alakija, Vice-chairman, Famfa Oil in Nigera said: "Always be determined. Never allow people who say no to discourage you. I find that you can always turn a no into a yes - I learned that along the way on my climb up here."

Dr Amina Hersi Moghe, Founder, Horyal Investments, from Uganda said: "We have the biggest number of women in Africa who are doing are doing informal business. One of the challenges is the investment is not there. We need long term financing."

Representing The Queen's Commonwealth Trust, Chidinma Akaniro, Youth of West Africa said: "Women need to learn to speak up and be visible. If your voice is not heard, your reality will not be understood... Be a walking advert for your business. Be your own biggest fan and learn to sell yourself."

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Sabeedah Mahomed, Maths Wise Tuition Centre, in South Africa: “Believe in what you are doing and have a sense of resilience to rely on – it is the oxygen needed for the journey.”

Alice Nkulikiyinka, Country Director of Business Professionals Network (BPN) and Board Member of the Rwanda Development Board said: “I would advise mentors to motivate young women to stay true to themselves, to stay who they are, to establish a strong personality that allows them to understand that they can excel with their skills.”

CWEIC Chief Executive Samantha Cohen CVO said: “It's an honour to host such distinguished and successful African businesswomen joining today's webinar to share their personal experiences. The generosity of today's leaders will enable the next generation to thrive. It's humbling to hear their stories and challenges they overcame to triumph.”

A recording of the webinar can be accessed via the following link:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/8779474315298874639>

Background

The Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC)

The Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council is the Commonwealth's business network. With over 90 business and government Strategic Partners from 27 countries and territories, CWEIC has a mandate to facilitate trade and investment throughout the 54 member nations of the Commonwealth. Every two years we host the Commonwealth Business Forum in association with the host country of CHOGM and the Commonwealth Chair-in-Office. We're looking forward to the Commonwealth Business Forum 2021 in Rwanda.

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