

**TALKING POINTS BY SICILY K. KARIUKI (MRS), CBS, CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, YOUTH AND GENDER AFFAIRS DURING KEPSA INAUGURAL GLOBAL WOMEN SUMMIT, SAROVA PANAFRIC HOTEL, NAIROBI, 9TH AUGUST**

Carol Kariuki, Chief Executive Officer KEPSA

Tumi Frazier, Director Global Women Summit Africa

Grace Musyoka, Director SheCares International

Gloria Ndekei, Chair Gender Sector Board KEPSA

Distinguished Guests

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is an honour to be invited to speak at this Global Women's Summit in Kenya, a first in Kenya. I commend the leadership of *Kenya Private Sector Alliance* who in partnership with *SheCares International* have created this forum to strengthen women and families worldwide for women's empowerment and entrepreneurship.

This resonates very well in Kenya, where Gender equality and empowerment is at the centre of this government's national agenda- the government is a key champion in GEWE.

The Government of Kenya has a strong position on Equality and Women Empowerment which underscores full attainment of the rights of women and the elimination of discrimination and violence against women.

His Excellency, the President is the national gender champion and has set out a clear vision for this Government and the Country as a whole. His Commitment which was made globally states clearly in his belief '*Progress for Women is Progress for All*'.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

This is re-emphasized in the transformative economic agenda and structural reforms that have so far been implemented by the Jubilee Administration over the last three years.

In particular the Government's Economic Transformation Agenda includes:

- (i) Creating a conducive business environment for job creation;
- (ii) Investing in sectoral transformation to ensure broad based and sustainable economic growth, and in particular agricultural transformation to ensure food security;
- (iii) Investing in infrastructure in areas such as transport, logistics, energy and water;
- (iv) Investing in quality and accessible health care services and quality education as well as strengthening the social safety net to reduce the burden on the households and promote shared and equitable growth; and
- (v) Consolidating the gains made in devolution in order to provide better service delivery and enhanced economic development.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Why is Women Economic Empowerment Important for Kenya?**

The Government understands women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive growth and therefore it is important to create an enabling environment. Women economic empowerment also directly benefits the country in that economically empowered women are able to uplift their families; they have access to better education for their children, improved health and nutrition, and general poverty eradication.

According to a report by DFID, the total agricultural output in Africa could increase **by up to 20%** if women's access to agricultural input was equal to men. In Kenya, women-owned businesses account for over **48% of all SMEs**, contributing about **20% of** the Kenyan gross domestic product (GDP). An estimated **85% of women-owned businesses** are in the informal business sector.

The Government of Kenya has taken cognizant that the Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) are a critical part of the private sector and are the best source of new products and innovations that will anchor its future growth. Empowering women will translate to job creation, reduced poverty and improved balance of trade.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Achieving economic empowerment of women requires sound macroeconomic and social policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitments created under a gender specific lens.

Kenya has published macro-economic policies whose overall objective is to achieve sustainable economic prosperity for all Kenyans- Men and Women alike.

The Government has been guided by four **policy imperatives**, in realizing women's economic empowerment as follows:

- First is ensuring that women are at the heart of decision making. The constitution provides for **not more than two-thirds of any gender to constitute elective and appointed positions in government**- public service, parliament and the executive;
- Secondly, a progressive legal framework secures the position of women as enshrined by **Constitution of Kenya Article 27, (1) Every person is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law.**

And by **Article 201(b)** - The public finance system shall promote an equitable society, and in particular—Expenditure shall promote the equitable development of the country, including by making special provision for marginalised groups and areas. In addition the **Public Finance Management Act (2012)** makes special provisions that support gender responsive budgeting;

- Third, is **access to factors of production and access to services** like credit, infrastructure, and catalytic funds. In the formulation of national policies, we must ensure equitable access to property and services, infrastructure, technology, employment and credit for the benefit of all.

- Finally, **access to market via a transformative policy** aimed at affirmative action and gender responsive budgeting to guarantee women and youth via the 30% Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO).

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to elaborate on the interventions, spearheaded by my Ministry;

- I. The **Women Enterprise Fund (WEF)** provides accessible credit to women to start and or expand business. The Government has invested **USD 32** Million since inception to over I million women beneficiaries and 64, 000 Groups supported.
- II. The **Youth Enterprise Development Fund** which focuses on enterprise development as a key strategy to increase participation of the Kenyan youths (we are keen on young women ) in employment creation and Nation building. Over **USD 127 Million** has been disbursed to date.
- III. The **UWEZO Fund**, with an initial allocation of **USD 56Million** and provides interest free credit to groups of youth, women and persons with disability. The concept of group borrowing is aimed at correcting for physical collateral, as groups provide the needed social collateral. The Fund has invested over **USD 5.3 Million** in capacity building for the target beneficiaries. The **USD 56 Million** has been **disbursed to 55,244** groups reaching **846,949** members.

The Government continues to increase the capitation of its Affirmative Fund and allocated a total of **USD 16 Million** in the **FY 2015/2016**.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Government has taken a holistic approach in its policy making by addressing social barriers and tackling social exclusion issues such as harmful cultural practices and attitudes, discrimination and gender based violence.

Specifically, Government has enacted various laws to address violence against women. These include the Sexual Offences Act (2007), the FGM Act (2011) and the National Policy towards Prevention and Response to SGBV. This has led to a reduction of **6%** in the prevalence rate in Kenya; For example the FGM Prevalence reduced to **21% from 27%** - largest drop in the world in this period.

Government through the Ministry provides national leadership in coordination of the SGBVs framework- The 5Ps. This comprehensive 5Ps include the following approaches; **Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Programming** and **Partnerships**. The aim is to facilitate the achievement of gender equality and economic empowerment by addressing barriers facing women.

Some of the key initiatives within the **5Ps** framework are: Awareness creation in communities on SGBV, hotlines for survivors to report, and the establishment of SGBV Centers for survivors and survivors' protection through prosecution of perpetrators. In summary our Constitution and Government both outline a strong position of Zero Tolerance to gender violence!

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In closing, Government is reaching out for stronger cross-sectional partnerships, improved coordination among state and non-state actors and increased dialogue. Private Sector is a key stakeholder in this. This will ensure successful implementation of these policies.

I wish to thank KEPSA for this great initiative and reiterate that the Government will keep partnering with the private sector to develop policies that provide an enabling environment for the economic empowerment of women in our great Country.

**Asante Sana, God Bless.**