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**SPEECH**

**BY**

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Programme Director,

Leadership of the African Renewable Energy Alliance

Director General of the Energy Commission of Nigeria, Prof Abubakar Sani  
Sambo

Political leadership in our midst

Civil Society leadership in our midst

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Global agitation for a shift and change in energy production paradigm happens at a time when Africa's economic development is on the gradual rise. Primary to Africa's economic development and growth is the reindustrialization of the continent. This imminent development in the continent represents an opportunity for the women on the continent. Moreso, with society having moved to the information age, this era ushers in a fundamental shift which requires new forms of knowledge and

creativity as Africa takes its rightful place as a competitive global economic player.

Currently, minerals and energy complex informs the energy production paradigm of many countries including South Africa and most of these countries are largely dependent on coal for electricity generation. A change in energy production paradigm is necessary, and women should be at the forefront of this energy revolution. This revolution should be premised on the utilization of diverse energy sources, implying that there must be an intensive promotion of energy mix. Women of the continent should be champions of this new energy production paradigm that promotes the utilization of clean energy sources. This will give credence to the energy production paradigm that hinges on environmental justice and the promotion and utilization of diverse energy sources (such as clean energy sources, renewable energy sources and other non-grid sources).

The fundamental challenge of every developing country like South Africa, is how it mobilize its resources in a way that will bring structural change

necessary to stimulate a sustained and balanced growth for the entire economy and effect economic redistribution. Energy, and especially electricity has become essential to modern technological systems and it has shaped contemporary development patterns. This influence determines many aspects of societal development.

It is within this context that we have seen a gradual shift in the political economy of energy in South Africa, with government taking a centre stage in the development of plans that will constitute our energy future – as we are not an island, but part of the global village and we are affected by exogenous effects in the global energy space.

Ladies and gentlemen, this shift that is being agitated for in the energy production technologies space present opportunities, and equally presents enormous challenges for women on the continent of Africa. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century represents a window of opportunity where Africa should carve its economic niche and be pioneers in this energy revolution that is before us. This opportunity hinges upon technological development and innovation, which are primary pillars for an inclusive and shared economic activity.

Women as leaders of change in society should lead Africa's advance towards total economic emancipation.

Ladies and gentlemen, this epoch in societal advancement on the African continent compels us to be champions of women economic empowerment and participation. We also have a responsibility in ensuring that women owned enterprises are integrated into the mainstream economic activity on our continent. In a broader context, this is located within the struggle of women against the oppression and all other forms of discrimination towards women. As such, ours (the responsibility of current generation of women) is really about addressing the gender question and empower women to be their own liberators from both the economic and social bondage. As we know that without increased participation of women in the economy (and the energy space) of the continent, our communities will forever toil in poverty and underdevelopment.

The whole world is seeking new forms of technological innovation and it is strongly agitating for a move to clean energy sources to address

challenges that we face from our day-to-day activities, and women of Africa must be at the forefront because you have all what it takes.

*According to the World Economic Forum, The World's growing population, much of it more prosperous and more urban, will demand more quantities and different types of food. To meet this growing demand in the next twenty years, farmers will need to increase production by 70 – 100 % and reduce post-harvest loss. These changing diets – driven by rising incomes and other shifts – will increase demand for resource-intensive products such as meat.*

*The global demand for meat will increase by 50% by 2025, helping to drive a foreseen increase of 42 % in grain demand. In a world where nearly one billion people suffer from hunger or malnutrition, existing food and agriculture systems seem ill prepared to meet these challenges.*

This simply means we have to be more innovative and we need to come up with new innovative forms of production and resource management. The Women of Africa can lead in this revolution, because we have the ability.

*On the energy front, the world economy will demand at least 40% more energy by 2030 compared to today. It is estimated that 77% of the requisite energy infrastructure has yet to be built. Increasing access to energy is a priority for many countries – 1.5 billion people in the developing world lack access to electricity and more than 3 billion rely on biomass for heating and cooking.*

This is a clear illustration that African women must think big and seek to provide solutions through technological innovation not just for Africa but for global markets.

*It is suggested that the world could face a 40% shortfall between water demand and available freshwater supply by 2030. Many countries are already extracting groundwater faster than it can be replenished. If current*

*trends continue, by 2030 two-thirds of the world's population will live in areas of high water stress.*

If you look at these challenges and if nothing is done in terms of coming up with innovative ways to mitigate their hard effects on mankind, women would be the most hard hit. Because, it is no longer a point of argument, but a real fact of life that, lack of energy, lack of water and lack of food affect women the most.

Although these challenges are enormous and Africa will certainly emerge at the forefront of technological innovation.

In the information age, it is important that women on the continent become a strong and visible component of both SMME and big business sectors. Women's enterprises are central and must be counted as part of those successfully growing the African economy and spearheading the energy revolution. They need to actively engage in the process of searching and

identifying suitable related business models for their enterprises. They need to set trends and educate themselves in order to set best practices.

Their products must compete and find a place in the international markets. These products should be accompanied by uniqueness, excellence, technological sophistication and innovation. It is only once these qualities are embraced as part of our own manufacturing, designing and delivery standards, that African women produced products will excel in the international market. It is through the expansion of entrepreneurial and technological horizons that women in business will be able to fast-track economic empowerment.

I thank you!!!

