

AFRICA BRIEFING

PRESS



Africa-Spain Summit highlights vital role of women entrepreneurs in African economy

THE first Africa-Spain Cooperation Summit, held recently in Madrid, concluded with a compelling session focused on the pivotal role of women entrepreneurs in driving the African economy. The event shed light on the significant challenges and discrimination faced by these women. Distinguished panellists, including influential figures such as María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, President of the Women for Africa Foundation, and Grace Obado, President of Africa 2.0 (Spain), highlighted the need for empowering women and addressing the obstacles they encounter.

In her opening remarks, María Teresa Fernández de la Vega commended the panel's chosen theme, stating, 'Women's entrepreneurship empowers African societies, fostering development, well-being, and peace. The commitment and generosity of women know no bounds.' She also emphasised the ongoing struggles faced by women on the continent, particularly their reliance on unregulated employment, lack of access to education, religious radicalism, early pregnancies, and forced marriages. Despite these challenges, De la Vega affirmed that 'women are the driving force of the continent, the agents of development, and the leaders of progress and advancement in African development.'

De la Vega stressed that achieving a more egalitarian society requires granting women access to education and allowing them to bring their business ideas to life. She advocated for providing support in the form of credit, training, and resources. Highlighting Africa's status as the continent with the highest rate of women entrepreneurs globally (24 percent), De la Vega stressed the importance of government support for women entrepreneurs, warning that failing to do so would result in a loss of talent.

The panellists shared their personal experiences and discussed their efforts within their respective organisations to facilitate women's empowerment. Marta Maiques, Communications

Director of AFFAEME, a large women's entrepreneurship group in Barcelona, underscored her association's commitment to women and its collaboration with governments to secure funding for women's initiatives. Another objective of AFFAEME is to enhance the visibility of women.

The panellists also examined the multifaceted role of women in African families and economies, acknowledging the persistently high gender gap and the challenges women face despite their entrepreneurial spirit. Grace Obado, President of Africa 2.0 (Spain), stressed the need for legislative measures to drive change, remarking, 'We have to legislate to achieve changes.'

Massita González-Reguerál Kambou and Mariétou Coulibaly echoed similar sentiments. They discussed the hurdles faced by women entrepreneurs, the transformative role of women in Africa's agricultural sector, and the inclusion of women in scientific fields. They called for support not only from Spain but from all of Europe, emphasising the unity required among women worldwide. They also praised the European Commission's efforts in advancing women's rights and stressed the importance of integrating these rights across all sectors.

Participants highlighted that Africa's progress and development hinge on the contributions of women. They expressed their determination to continue fighting for equality and underlined the need for unity among women to achieve their goals.

Concluding the first Africa-Spain Summit, Hassan M. Alaoui, President of One Africa, the organising entity, addressed various topics of interest, including renewable energies, digitalisation, agri-food security, investments, financing, and cooperation. Alaoui underscored the vast opportunities Africa offers, urging Spain to turn its attention toward this continent brimming with possibilities.