

Madam Patricia Secke, President and founder of African Femmes Performantes; Board; staff and members of African Femmes Performantes,

H.E. Dr. Lalla Malika Issoufou MAHAMADOU, First Lady of the Republic of Niger; Thank you H.E. for honoring us with your presence and please convey to H.E. President of the Republic, Issoufou MAHAMADOU and the people of Republic of Niger, our gratitude for your presence today. Merci Boku.

Honorable Veronique Kamana Upite, Mayor of the City of Kolwezi' - Madam Mayor Congratulations on the recent elections in DRC, we look forward to working with you on AGOA eligibility and others in coming months.

Excellences Ambassadors; members of the diplomatic Corp; representative of the host country governments, distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

Let me first thank the organizers, for the invitation to be here today to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Business Inspiring Women Conference with you; a major

accomplishment; that deserve everyone recognition and acknowledgement—Madam President - BRAVO—BRAVO—BRAVO --to you ; your dedicated board ; staff and members across the globe.

As a partner organization, The AGOA Civil Society Organization Network Secretariat of the Foundation for Democracy in Africa cherish our relationship with Africa Femmes Performantes (AFP), and look forward every year to co- sponsoring and supporting Business Inspiring Women Conference—a Marque event during Women History Month that bring leaders from civil society; business; and government together to underscore the important role that women play in the Economic life of a nation, and to advance recommendations and programs critical to strengthening economic and political freedom in Africa.

This year's theme" Let's put our power together as a CATALYST for investing to grow Business: When Women act... the World changes" is timely and a call to ACTION, by AFP to all of us.

Madam President, Your excellences, distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen. By 2050, Africa's population is

projected to reach 2.8 billion, from the current 1.2 billion. Sixty percent of the population is below the age of 35 years and Africa's middle class is growing. African countries stand to provide the youthful workforce and talent, critical to drive global development and become the center of global commerce and trade. It is also expected that African countries will become strategic partners to the United States by 2050

**Therefore, let's put our power together as a CATALYST for investing to grow Business: When Women act... the World changes"**

Currently, Africa is experiencing an expansion in small and medium enterprise (SME's) development. Today, SME's with strong participation by women entrepreneurs create approximately 80% of the regions employment, and SME's are establishing a new middle class and fueling demand for new goods and services.

However, Madam president; Your Excellences; distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen —African SME's face a number of supply chain constraints, logistical issues, lack of access to financing; and other

barriers that limit their competitiveness in domestic and export markets;

**Therefore let's put our power together as a CATALYST for investing to grow Business: When Women act... the World changes"**

That is why we must put our power together on both sides of the Atlantic ocean to re inforce the comparative advantages of our SME's by putting in place free market reforms to strengthen the competitiveness of our – Small Medium Enterprises- The engine of economic growth and job creation

My organization –the Foundation for Democracy in Africa; Africa Femmes Perfomantes and others members of the AGOA Civil Society Organization Network, in the United States and across Africa see the benefits that the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) provides to African SME's as a CATALYST to grow business; empower women entrepreneurs and help create badly needed good paying jobs for our youth.

Through advocacy and programs, AFP and other members of the AGOA Civil Society Organization

Network provide technical assistance, across Africa to increase Africa's SME's exports to the United States, collectively we use the annual AGOA Spring conference slated for 10-11 April 2019, at the Embassy of Cote d'Ivoire, to discuss challenges and opportunities facing civil society; SME's and Women entrepreneurs for inclusion in discussions during the annual US-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum- AGOA Forum, that will take place in Abidjan, 3-6 August 2019, we welcome your participation . [www.agoacsonetwork.org](http://www.agoacsonetwork.org)

Through the Africa Trade Development Center (ATDC) we use the AfrICANDO Trade Investment Conference and Expo slated for October 16-18 2019 to present African export ready SME's to buyers, distributors in the United States and markets in the western hemisphere [www.africatdc.com](http://www.africatdc.com) ; and on our e-commerce portal [www.africandomall.com](http://www.africandomall.com) , we welcome your participation.

In closing, let me again thank Madam Patrica Seck, and her staff for bringing us together every year and helping all of us to remain committed to inclusive trade; women

empowerment; free markets; and advancing economic and political Freedom.

**Again; let's put our power together as a CATALYST for investing to grow Business: When Women act... the World changes" Let us support Africa Femmes Perfomantes**

I thank you.