



REMARKS BY

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**DURING THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
CELEBRATIONS BY THE KENYATTA UNIVERSITY WOMEN
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT HUB (KU-WEE)**

**FRIDAY, 8TH MARCH, 2024
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
NAIROBI, KENYA**

THEME: "INVEST IN WOMEN: ACCELERATE PROGRESS"

Salutation

(in the order)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Allow me to begin my address by **recognizing and appreciating the great and commendable initiatives by the organizers** of this event on this special day for the women worldwide.
- Looking at the **goal of the Kenyatta University Women's Economic Empowerment Hub**, namely, promoting women's economic empowerment, **I take pride in associating with this body of knowledge** that envisions a society free of gender inequities and inequalities with economically empowered women.
- I must say that the **theme of this special day, "invest in women: accelerate progress"** captures the true essence of this day which is, for the most part, aimed at celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future.
- At the risk of sounding like a critical theorist, *now that I am with scholars*, this theme, if I may, is an extrapolation of the African Proverb **"if you educate a man, you educate an individual. But if you educate a woman, you educate a nation."**

- Indeed, and in fact, **investing in woman has always been and will always be the surest way of accelerating progress.**
- Ladies and gentlemen, I have organized, participated and given talks in a number of international Women's Day celebration **since 2005 when I joined the Central Organization of Trade Unions** (Kenya), COTU (K) as a Gender officer.
- However, **this is a special one** and close to my heart for the simple reason that I am now outside the enclaves of the trade unionism and thus I can look at the role played by this body with a lot of objectivity.
- **Never before have I felt this strong assurance** that my work with both COTU (Kenya) and the East African Trade Union Confederation (EATUC) was, for the most part, preparing me, as a woman, to appreciate the role that trade unions have played in the furtherance of women rights and welfare.
- With the benefit of hindsight, **I want to ask you to join me in appreciating the history of this movement of passionate and resilient women** which has its genesis with trade unionism.
- While I thought, previously, that it was the duty and responsibility of any responsible trade union to advocate for the rights and welfare of all their workers, **I now take particular pride in having a history with this organization** that have since the start of industrialization agitated for the rights and welfare of working men and women.

- Allow me, at this point, to **laud the trade unions** for not only raising wages, shortening hours of work and providing other supplement benefits, but also **raising the discussion on the rights and welfare of working women.**
- Today, we must **remember the great work that they have done** in **raising the discussion for equal pay for equal work.**
- **Why, I ask, should a woman who does the same kind of work as a man receive less pay simply because she is a woman?**
- And if you are seated here today and are probably thinking that **this is not a Kenyan problem** maybe you haven't seen the glaring statistics.
- According to a study done by the organization I serve, ILO, the **Gender Pay Gap in Kenya has expanded in recent years** from 31% in 2019 to 46% in 2021.
- For instance, according to the study, **female workers at Equity Bank of Kenya** earn 52% less than their male counterparts for the same job done.

- All of us here today, as believers in a world where women are empowered to achieve their potential and, consequently, accelerate growth, **we must join in the discussion**, using our diverse expertise, to ensure women get equal pay for equal work.
- At the same time, I would like you to join me **in appreciating and acknowledging the special role that has been played by the International Labour Organization (ILO)**, the body where I serve today.
- The **ILO**, from its very foundation, has **been committed to the principle that labour rights are human rights**, a conviction that inherently includes the rights of women.
- Over the past century, the **ILO has played a pivotal role in shaping international labour standards**, influencing national policies, and fostering a global environment that recognizes and upholds the rights of women in the workforce.
- One of the cornerstones of the ILO's commitment to women's rights is **encapsulated in its core conventions** that have become the bedrock for promoting gender equality and empowering women in the world of work.

- **Convention No. 100**, concerning **Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value**, adopted in 1951, is a testament to the ILO's dedication to ensuring that women receive equal pay for work of equal value.
- Furthermore, **Convention No. 111**, concerning **Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation**, adopted in 1958, reaffirms the ILO's commitment to eradicating discrimination based on gender.
- This convention sets the stage for **workplaces that are free from prejudice, where women can thrive based on their skills, capabilities, and dedication**.
- Most importantly, **Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work**, adopted in 2019, represents a crucial step forward, addressing the pervasive issue of violence and harassment that disproportionately affects women.
- As the ILO, we wish to **thank the Government of Kenya**, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, **for their commitment to ensure that they ratify ILO C190 and C189**.
- **Ratification of ILO C190 is a timely response** to the evolving challenges faced by Kenyan women in the modern workforce and provides a comprehensive framework for preventing, addressing, and eliminating such behaviors.

- Equally, the **Ratification of ILO C189** which speaks to the **rights of Domestic Workers** will go a long way in **ensuring the safety of the thousands of Kenyan women** who work as domestic workers both locally and as migrant workers.
- Ladies and Gentlemen, as we reflect on the present, we cannot mark this International Women's Day without **acknowledging the fact that we stand on the shoulders of many giants.**
- The **men and women who dared to create a world the women of the yesteryears, today and the future** would grow socially, politically and economically.
- And considering I am in **Kenyatta University** I must celebrate, among others, Prof. Olive Mugenda, Prof. Caroline Thoruwa, Prof. Judith Waudu, Prof. Grace Wamue, Prof. Nelson Wawire, Prof. Germano Mwabu and Prof. Simon Onywere for their dedication and determination towards ensuring that this university remains a champion of women empowerment.
- The **list of Kenyan women who have gone before us and on whose shoulders we stand is unending** and I must say that **we are greatly indebted to them.**

- While we rightfully applaud the women who have played a crucial role in empowering other women, **it is equally important to recognize the men in our society who continue to support the ideals of this special day.**
- One such remarkable man was my father, **Joseph Jolly Mugalla.**
- You may have noticed **my strong connection to trade unions,** given that my father, a former Secretary General of COTU (K), was a dedicated trade unionist.
- Growing up with a father who was actively involved in trade unions meant **experiencing the staged movements for workers** and participating in various labour day activities.
- Further, it also meant **learning the art of public speaking** and, consequently, **learning to make enough noise** on issues that matter the most to me so as to get the attention that is required from the authorities.
- Today, as I reflect on my journey and recognize that I am the tenth born in a family of 11 siblings, **it brings me immense joy and fulfillment to wake up each day knowing that my work aligns with the essence of this special day.**

- Interestingly, I am **the only one among my siblings who chose to prioritize advocating for workers' rights** over pursuing my dream profession.
- I would like to take this opportunity to **express my gratitude**, albeit in absentia, **to my late father for guiding me in this direction.**
- Ladies and Gentlemen, as we celebrate this day, I am **reminded of the increasing cases of femicide** in Kenya.
- Today, more than yesterday, **is a better day to join or energize the war against femicide.**
- It is **disheartening to witness the pervasive and brutal attacks** on our sisters, mothers, and daughters.
- **We cannot stand idly** by while the lives of our fellow human beings are mercilessly taken away and thus **we must raise our voices** against the heinous crimes that disproportionately affect women.
- In solidarity, we must remember that **dead women count** and that **behind every statistic, there is a name, a face, and a story.**
- **Each life lost is a tragedy that sends shockwaves** through families, communities, and our collective conscience **and it is our duty to stand up against the perpetrators of these crimes** and demand accountability, justice, and systemic change.

- Through collective efforts, and the role played by this Hub, **we can continue influencing policy, challenge societal norms**, and create an environment where women feel safe, respected, and valued.
- **We must foster a culture** that rejects violence, discrimination, and prejudice in all its forms.
- As I conclude, I wish to speak to **the students** gathered here today by sharing a profound analogy that resonates deeply with our commitment to issues affecting women.
- To explain this analogy, I would like you to imagine a **breakfast table with a plate of fried eggs and bacon**.
- The **analogy is better described as Breakfast Table** with the chicken and the pig, each representing a distinct level of participation and commitment.
- As students, **we often find ourselves engaged** in various activities, events, and causes.
- **Some of us are involved**, akin to the chicken, contributing in a way that mirrors the provision of eggs for breakfast.
- **The involvement is there**, but it may not necessarily require a profound sacrifice.
- Now, **imagine the pig** – the one committed to providing bacon for breakfast.
- The **pig's participation is not a mere contribution; it is a wholehearted commitment, involving a significant sacrifice** to provide a life-sustaining body part.

- This **analogy serves as a powerful metaphor** for our approach to issues affecting women.
- **We can be the chicken**, merely **involved** in discussions and awareness campaigns, providing symbolic gestures that may not demand substantial sacrifices.
- Or, **we can be the pig, committed** to making a real impact, dedicating ourselves to actively stand for what we believe in, particularly when it comes to addressing the challenges and issues that women face.
- The **International Women's Day is a reminder that our commitment** to gender equality should not be merely an involvement – it should be a dedicated, unwavering commitment.
- It **requires us to be like the pig**, willing to make sacrifices and contribute to the transformative changes needed in our society.
- Let us **not settle for being mere bystanders**, offering token gestures that do not truly address the root causes of gender inequality.
- Instead, **let us be committed, like the pig**, in our pursuit of justice, equality, and empowerment for women.
- Let us be **willing to provide the sustained effort, time, and advocacy** necessary to bring about meaningful change.
- **I challenge each one of us here today to reflect on your role in issues affecting women.**
- **Will you be the chicken**, involved but perhaps not making a profound impact?
- **Or will you be the pig**, committed to making a difference, understanding that your active participation is essential for positive change?

- **Let us choose commitment over mere involvement**, knowing that our collective efforts can contribute to a world where the rights and dignity of women are upheld and celebrated.

Thank you for your attention!

Happy International Women's Day!