





CEO'S TALKING POINTS WEDF

-  His Excellency the President of the Republic of Rwanda,
-  Her Excellency the First Lady of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;
-  Leaders of Rwanda's High Institutions;
-  Honorable Ministers & Ambassadors;
-  Hon. Trade Commissioner, of the African Union Commission;
-  Hon. Secretary General of the East African Community;

 The Executive Director of International Trade Center;

 Resident Coordinator of the One UN;

 Distinguished Guests; Ladies & gentlemen.

I welcome you all to the 14th World Export Development Forum (WEDF), and Women Vendors Exhibition and Forum (WEVEF).

At the 50th Anniversary of the International Trade Center's (ITC) promotion of global trade, it was fitting to host this event in Africa for the first time, and Rwanda is honored to be that country.

Allow me at the outset, to recognize the personal role of my colleague and predecessor at the Rwanda Development Board – Ambassador Valentine Rugwabiza, whose clear articulation of Rwanda’s vision contributed to this partnership with the ITC.

Yet, this shouldn’t be surprising. After all, Rwanda shares the same vision as ITC, that a vibrant private sector is the only way trade-led growth and development can be achieved.

A vision of the urgency to create employment opportunities, particularly for the youth, and to spur entrepreneurship among the citizens.

The vision of inclusive economic growth, and empowerment of women.

It is in this regard that that this year's theme is "*SMEs: Creating jobs through trade*". And for the 1st time, WEDF has been combined with the Women Vendors Exhibition and Forum (WVEF).

 Your Excellences;

Rwanda has a proven track record of economic, social and political inclusion of women, and we are cognizant of women's immense contribution to the transformation of this country, and championing greater regional market integration.

This forum has attracted an impressive array of female entrepreneurs, exhibitors and leaders that are already feeling at home among their Rwandan peers - yesterday they launched together a

special initiative to promote Women Entrepreneurs & SMEs in Public Procurement.

Moreover, above 90% of business operations in Africa, and indeed in Rwanda are SMEs, many of these female owned.

Rwanda recognizes the immense potential contribution of SMEs to the economy, and this continues to be the cornerstone of RDB's work, and the government reforms to ease the cost of doing business.

- In a recent Global Competitiveness Index Report, Rwanda has maintained its position as 3rd in Africa, a position also held in the World Bank's "Doing Business Report", for the last four years.
- We have taken concrete steps towards easing international trade and championed greater regional market integration.
- The East African community and customs union has opened up Rwanda's businesses to a wider market, creating immense opportunities for trade.

➤ The northern corridor partnership between Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya is fast improving infrastructure investments, even as non-tariff barriers have significantly reduced.

➤ **Excellences;**

➤ **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

The WEDF & WVEF have come to Africa at the right time, when the continent needs a breakthrough to increase global share of trade beyond the current 3.3%, and intra-Africa trade beyond the current 11.5%.

With the baseline this low, it means immense opportunities for growth.

The Rwanda Development Board is happy to partner with the ITC, in hosting this forum for learning, and networking among entrepreneurs and their facilitators.

I trust that business deals will be made, and innovative ideas generated to further grow trade and development. I also hope, that you enjoy the Rwandan hospitality, and stay longer, and return soon.

Thank you for your kind attention.