



**Notes, Dr Greg Mills, Danish Africa Commission Gender Conference,
Maputo, 15 August 2008**

1. Greetings and thanks.
2. You will be bombarded by many statistics over the day, but allow me please to emphasise six areas – six sets which I believe that you should not forget about as we embark on the exciting discussions ahead of us:
 - (i) Around just 10 percent of all wages in Africa go to women
 - (ii) Women on average work 10-15 hours more per week than men
 - (iii) African women own only around one percent of the continent's overall economy
 - (iv) Today's Africa's share of the world's young population (0-24) is 15%; by 2025 it will be 25%
 - (v) As one result, by 2040, the percentage of Africa's population that are of working age will increase from 50% today to about 65%, the same level that the rest of the world is at on average. This has tremendous opportunities for Africa's economies, with the right sets of skills, systems, institutions and policies in place. We need to start thinking about this longer-term and all the opportunities -- good and bad -- that this demographic change presents us with
 - (vi) And in this vein, we should remember today of the need and find the means for Africa's women to gain access to better health-care and education facilities, where the focus is not just on quantity of students but the quality of education offered. Adult literacy in SS Africa is still skewed 69%: 50% men: women; and while primary completion rates for women have improved from 46% to 55% between 1991 and 2006, these still lag behind the comparative rates for men, 56% and 65%.
3. Clearly this situation is unfair and unsustainable, and not only for Africa's women. It is fundamentally to the detriment of Africa's economies. We cannot uplift Africa without finding the means to give those that work hardest (in my opinion) in these economies, the rural African woman, full access to economic opportunities. It is not a matter, thus, of being politically correct as a man to say this; it is a matter of being morally right and economically sensible as well. The time for lip service on gender equality in Africa is over; the time for action is now! *Hasta la Victoria para Siempre!*
4. It is thus very important that this conference comes up with some practical suggestions and solutions as to how the tremendous potential of Africa's working population and especially its women can be unleashed in the most productive ways.

5. To do so, we need, however, to have an open mindset. Although this is the Danish Africa Commission, us African Commissioners outnumber the foreigners on the Commission – and indeed on this podium. Thus while we should be thinking about what it is that the international (donor) community should be doing in partnership with us to expedite development and action on gender equality, we also need, fundamentally, to be thinking about what we should be doing for ourselves as Africans to change our own circumstances, principally through expanding commercial opportunities to women and also young people.

For example:

- What sort of global and bilateral trade preferences should our government be attempting to negotiate on our behalf, and what strategies should they be devising and alliances establishing to do so?
- How might we realise the unrealised potential in African agriculture?
- What sort of skills-sets are necessary to beneficiate goods in the rural areas and the cities; where should emphasis be placed on infrastructure to open up rural and urban economies? And, without bombarding you with too many thoughts (I hope!), finally
- What can be done to spur African women entrepreneurship in terms of access to finance in particular?

Let me emphasise: this is not an event for sketching grand schemes, though vision is important -- we would like to see some practical solutions which can be immediately taken forward.

This brings me, finally, to the task outlined before me today which is to describe the working method of this conference:

- AFTER THE OPENING PLENARY SESSION IN THE MORNING, THE PARTICIPANTS WILL BE DIVIDED INTO WORKING GROUPS.
- THE WORKING GROUPS WILL TAKE THE SUB-THEMES OF THE DISCUSSION PAPER AS ITS POINT OF DEPARTURE. THE AIM IS TO DISCUSS THE SUB-THEMES IN DEPTH AND ARRIVE AT CONCRETE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE AFRICA COMMISSION ON THE VARIOUS ISSUES.
- THE WORKING GROUPS WILL PRESENT THEIR FINDINGS IN THE PLENARY SESSION AT THE END OF THE CONFERENCE.
- THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE, INCLUDING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WORKING GROUPS, WILL BE COMPILED INTO A CONFERENCE PAPER, WHICH WILL FEED INTO THE COMMISSION'S FURTHER DELIBERATIONS.

Themes of the working groups

1. WOMEN'S OCCUPATION AND WORKLOAD
2. WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

3. AGRICULTURE AND RURAL ECONOMIES
4. LABOUR INTENSIVE MANUFACTURING
5. SOCIAL PROTECTION
6. ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
7. POLICY LEVEL WORKING GROUP

6. I wish you a most productive day. Thank you very much.

GJBM, 15 August 2008