

Gender

Women urged to take advantage of AfCFTA



By Getrude Ankah

THE Namibian High Commissioner to Ghana, Ambassador Selma Ashipala-Musavyi, has called on women entrepreneurs in Africa to leverage opportunities in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to export their products beyond the borders of their countries.

She further encouraged women to be more innovative, efficient and produce products that are of good quality so as to be competitive under the AfCFTA.

AfCFTA is an ambitious undertaking that brings together 1.3 billion people in 55 African countries to create the world's largest free trade area as measured by the number of participating member States.

Its objective is the creation of an integrated market for the trade in goods and services and the free movement of people and capital.

She made the call at the 4th Women in Trade Conference organised by the Women in Africa Network in Accra last Thursday.

Networking

Ambassador Ashipala-Musavyi further encouraged networking among businesses across the continent, especially among women.

She underscored the critical role of women in promoting sustainable livelihoods and called for more partners to support to help them to develop their entrepreneurial skills to increase production.

Touching on the AfCFTA protocol, she said "It's a platform for us to learn from each other. It speaks to Africa's unity because no one country can basically succeed on her own. So we need to network and to learn from each other. We are facing challenges in trade, common challenges and we need to learn from one other".

The High Commissioner also emphasised that "If we do

not network, if Ghanaian women for example do not go to Namibia and see what is in Namibia, and our women don't come here (Ghana), we are not going to be successful in trading. So we need to get out of our comfort zones, learn about the continent, what it is that the continent has to offer and harness our strength and see how we can move the

continent forward".

She also called for a regional sensitisation of the protocol to enhance cross border trade.

AfCFTA protocol

The Director for Institutional Matters and Programmes Coordination at the AfCFTA Secretariat, Prudence Sebahizi, who spoke on behalf of the Secretary General of AfCFTA, Wamkele Mene, underscored the importance of the AfCFTA protocol.

He said the protocol bridges the gap between African markets.

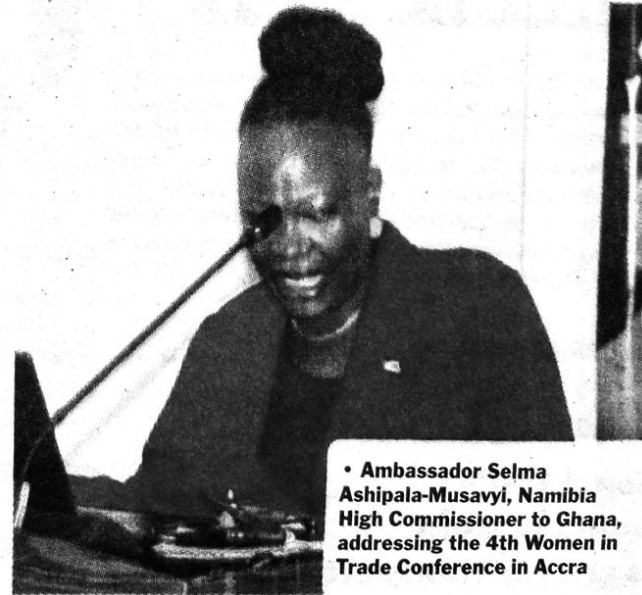
"This protocol is very important, it is one of eight

protocols that are part of the AfCFTA legal instruments but I can say it is the most important one. So when we talk about the AfCFTA it is about the markets of Africans, trade for Africans, by Africans and we have seen that the private sector — more than 90 per cent business in Africa — is owned by Small and midsize enterprises (SMEs), and those SMEs are made of women and the youth in a particular," he stated.

For his part, the Group Executive Director of the AfCFTA Policy Network (APN), Louis Yaw Afful, called for concerted efforts to integrate more women into the formal sector to maximise the benefit of the AfCFTA

"The assessment is simple. Women have not been performing well in terms of formal trade, and the informal sector, yes they are doing well but they need to be given some kind of holistic support in the area of capacity building, training, in the area of financial solution, in the area of expanding more women in not just trade, but related manufacturing."

"And so for now most governments are yet to have a concrete policy on women in trade that has not yet happened and I think that we are getting to that spectrum", he explained.



• Ambassador Selma Ashipala-Musavyi, Namibia High Commissioner to Ghana, addressing the 4th Women in Trade Conference in Accra