

Women in business critical players in propelling Africa to next level

BY TIMES REPORTER

—Absa SME Banking Director

ABSA Ghana's Head of SME, Agency Banking, and Partnerships, Audrey Abakah, has called on women to share ideas, connect with one another, and forge the right partnerships to build sustainable businesses across the continent.

She made these remarks during the Absa Inspire Me Conference 2024 held in Nairobi, Kenya.

In 2021, Ms Audrey Abakah led the process to conceptualise and implement the first Absa Inspire Me Conference in Ghana - an initiative aimed at supporting and empowering women-led SMEs.

This year's event took place in Kenya and attracted delegates from Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Mauritius, and Uganda, alongside representatives from ITC SheTrades Hubs across Africa and the UK.

In her address, Ms Abakah emphasised the transformative role of women in business, saying, "At Absa, we believe that empowering

women is not just about individual success. It is about societal transformation. It is about job creation and poverty alleviation. That is why our Women's Banking Proposition is uniquely designed to support women financially, strengthen their capacity, and create network and access to market platforms like the Inspire Me Conference."

The conference's key objectives focused on empowering women entrepreneurs to access new markets, providing networking opportunities, and creating a platform for direct contact with potential buyers and partners from across Africa and the UK.

These goals were highlighted during various sessions featuring a mix of local and international business leaders.

For the 2024 conference, Absa Bank Ghana partnered with the Ghana Export Promotion Authority, Ghana Enterprise Agency, Anglogold Ashanti (Obuasi Mine),

and the Organisation of Women in International Trade (OWIT).

These partners played a pivotal role by sending 30 delegates from diverse industries, such as Health & Beauty, Floral, Arts and Crafts, Confections, and Health to Nairobi.

The collaboration aimed to equip these delegates to sustainably operate their businesses and connect them with prominent businesses in Kenya, facilitating potential partnerships and business deals.

The conference featured engaging sessions on topics such as accessing finance and sustainable economic development.

It also featured inspiring addresses by Absa Ghana's Interim Managing Director, Adolph Kpegah, and his Kenyan counterpart, Abdi Mohamed, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Investments, Trade & Industry, Rebecca Miano, Kenya's President's Advisor on Women's Rights, Hon. Harriet



• Ms Abakah speaking at the event

Chiggai, among other leaders and entrepreneurs.

The success of this year's event sets a hopeful precedent for future conferences and ongoing support programmes by Absa to nurture the potential of women entrepreneurs across Africa.

"Absa is unwavering in its commitment to supporting women in business by providing platforms like what you are witnessing this morning, bridging the gaps, and unlocking the boundless potential of women entrepreneurs across Africa," she said.