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**THE THIRD AFRICAN WOMEN IN PROCESSING SUMMIT
AT THE SIDELINES OF
THE AFRICA INDUSTRIALIZATION WEEK 2024**

Under the theme

“Taking advantage of opportunities Under the AfCFTA- *A Path to Prosperity*”

Date: 09 to 13 December 2024 VENUE

: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

1. Background

- 1.1. The 17th Extraordinary Summit on Industrialization and Economic Diversification of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government decisions among others called on the African Union Commission to hold African Women in Processing (AWIP) summit alongside the Africa Industrialization Week (AIW). This decision recognized women's crucial role in driving Africa's industrial development, especially within the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The inaugural AWIP Summit, held in Niamey, Niger, provided a platform for women entrepreneurs to share experiences, learn from one another, and explore strategies for leveraging the opportunities presented by the AfCFTA to enhance their businesses and contribute to Africa's economic growth. The Second Summit held in Cairo Egypt in November, 2023 during the Intra-African Trade fair was an opportunity for the women not only to share best practices but also connect with regional and international markets.
- 1.2. The African Women in Processing (AWIP) initiative aims to bridge the gender gap in the manufacturing sector by providing African women with a platform for knowledge exchange, opportunity exploration, and partnership formation. By supporting the African Union's industrialization agenda and the goals of Agenda 2063, AWIP seeks to catalyze and accelerate women-led industrial processing. Through its focus on inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development, AWIP challenges structural norms and establishes a new policy framework that empowers women to benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). As a driver of intra-African trade, the AfCFTA offers immense potential for advancing women's economic independence and financial inclusion, particularly through e-commerce and other digital initiatives. Moreover, the AfCFTA creates opportunities for women to engage in trade and business within critical sectors such as agro-processing, the fashion value chain, and the services sector.
- 1.3. AWIP, therefore will expand economic and business opportunities for women involved in processing by empowering them to fully participate in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Through skills training, market access facilitation, and advocacy for financial inclusion, AWIP aims to equip women with the tools they need to succeed in this integrated African Market. By addressing the challenges women face in accessing finance and expanding their markets, AWIP will help women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and contribute to Africa's economic development, aligning with the goals of the New Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion (2020-2030). The period 2020-2030 was set aside by the African Union Heads of State and Government to scale up actions for the progressive gender inclusion towards sustainable development at the national, regional, and continental levels. The overall goal of the Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women is that every woman must be able to work, be paid and participate in the economy of her country.

2. Rationale and Justification

- 2.1. The AWIP play an important role for empowering women entrepreneurs in the processing industry within the AfCFTA framework, driving economic growth through enhanced productivity, job creation, innovation, sustainability, and fostering key networks and partnerships. By offering a platform for women to access essential skills, resources, and networks, this summit can catalyze economic development, harness the distinctive perspectives and contributions of women entrepreneurs, and establish a supportive ecosystem vital for their success under the AfCFTA, ultimately advancing Africa towards sustainable and inclusive industrialization and economic prosperity. Nonetheless, despite the increasing number of female-owned enterprises, women entrepreneurs throughout Africa's regions confront substantial hurdles, such as limited access to processing equipment, financing, raw materials, markets, infrastructure, investment, training, knowledge sharing, networking opportunities, and an unsupportive policy landscape. These challenges impede their capacity to expand their businesses, generate employment, and contribute to economic growth locally and nationally. The AWIP offers a critical platform to overcome these obstacles and create a fairer, more inclusive business environment for women entrepreneurs.

- 2.2. The Africa Industrialization Week (AIW) 2024, scheduled for 09 to 13 December in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, provides a significant opportunity for African women engaged in Processing to collaborate, sharing best practices from diverse regions of the continent. This event will bring together stakeholders from Africa and beyond to focus on how the continent can alter its current status quo and embark on a path towards inclusive and sustainable structural transformation, aligning with the implementation goals of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). As per the decision of the Heads of State and Government, the African Union Commission's Department of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry, and Minerals, in collaboration with partners, is organizing the Third AWIP Summit will be held during this year's AIW from December 09-13, 2024, aiming to drive discussions and initiatives that advance Africa's industrialization agenda within the context of implementing the AfCFTA.

- 2.3. AWIP's engagement in this high-level event is anchored in a compelling rationale that stems from the following essential factors:
 - i. **Empowering Women:** AWIP's involvement at the AIW event empowers women by providing a platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and skill enhancement, fostering their active participation in the industrialization agenda.

 - ii. **Leveraging AfCFTA Opportunities:** Participation in AIW allows AWIP to demonstrate how women in processing can leverage AfCFTA provisions to expand their market reach, penetrate regional and international markets, and contribute to intra-African trade.

- iii. **Showcasing Success Stories:** At AIW, AWIP showcases success stories of women in the industrial sector, inspiring others and demonstrating the significant contributions women make to Africa's industrialization agenda.
- iv. **Building Partnerships and Networks:** The networking opportunities offered by AIW are invaluable for AWIP's mission. By participating, women can connect with industry experts, potential partners, investors, and fellow women entrepreneurs.
- v. **Access to Funding and Investment:** AIW platform where entrepreneurs can present their businesses to potential investors and partners.
- vi. **Promoting Innovation:** By participating in AIW, AWIP encourages women in Processing to explore innovative ideas and technologies, fostering a culture of innovation that drives sectoral growth and development.
- vii. **Policy Advocacy and Influence:** AWIP uses its presence at AIW to advocate for policy changes that promote gender equality, women's empowerment, and sustainable industrial practices, aligning with the goals of the AfCFTA.

3. Objectives of the Summit

- 3.1. The Third AWIP Summit, scheduled at the sidelines of the 2024AIW, aims to empower women to spearhead the industrialization drive across the continent and capitalize on the opportunities presented by the integrated market under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This gathering will not only rally additional stakeholders to bolster women engaged in the conversion of Africa's raw materials into semi-finished and finished goods, thus significantly enhancing value addition. Given that intra-African trade is increasingly characterized by manufactured products, there exists a promising prospect for women entrepreneurs in the manufacturing sector to assume more prominent roles, paving the way for the continent's structural economic transformation and fostering job creation.
- 3.2. In addition, the following specific objectives will be pursued during the third AWIP Summit:
 - Provide a platform to sharing best practices, showcasing successful women for lessons learned among women entrepreneurs, professionals, and policymakers on the continent;
 - Provide capacity building through training sessions, workshops on various topics including market access, finance, technology adoption, value addition, and leadership development, and leveraging opportunities within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);

- Explore and encourage networking among participants to foster cooperation, joint ventures, among women and other stakeholders on the continent;
- Raise awareness about gender mainstreaming in industrialization and trade, and advocate for policies that promotes inclusivity, equal Offer networking opportunities, and supportive environment for women;
- Highlight and promote innovative technologies, products, and services developed by African Women in industrialization and processing sectors with the aim of boosting knowledge sharing and transfer.

4. Expected Outcomes

4.1. The following are the expected outcomes of the Third African Women in Processing Summit:

- Enhanced understanding and utilization of the opportunities presented by the AfCFTA, enabling women entrepreneurs to leverage the integrated market for their businesses and contribute to regional economic growth;
- Enhanced skills and capabilities among participants through training sessions and workshops on critical topics such as market access, finance, technology adoption, value addition, leadership development, and leveraging opportunities within the AfCFTA;
- Expanded networking opportunities fostering collaboration and joint ventures among women and other stakeholders, creating a supportive ecosystem for sustainable growth and development;
- Increased wareness about the importance of gender mainstreaming in industrialization and processing sectors, advocating for inclusive policies that provide equal opportunities and support for women in the industry; and
- Increased sharing of best practices and lessons learned among women entrepreneurs, professionals, and policymakers, leading to a more informed and empowered community.

5. Who Should Attend?

5.1. The Summit aim to attract diverse participants including African Women in Processing, and professionals in the industrialization and processing sectors; Government officials responsible for industrial development and gender affairs; representatives from the Regional Economic Communities; representatives from regional and

international organizations; Development Finance Institutions and investors interested in women led-enterprises; academia specializing in gender and industrialization; Civil society Organizations working towards women empowerment; Commercial Banks; Policy makers interested in Women Economic Empowerment and Industrialization; Academia; NGOs and Private sector institutions.

6. AWIP Summit Format

6.1. The week will have structured program of work which includes, among others, High-level opening ceremony, Ministerial Session, Panel Discussions showcasing successful women industrialists on the continent; intensive technical trainings and workshops, tailor-made for women in industrialization and processing; exhibitions and networking events. This is to ensure they are ready to utilize the opportunities offered through the full implementation of the AfCFTA.

- i. **High-level Opening Ceremony:** Featuring keynote speeches from prominent female leaders in the industrialization and processing sectors.
- ii. **Ministerial Session:** This high-level session will focus on addressing challenges, fostering collaboration, and driving impactful change to support women in trade across Africa.
- iii. **Panel Discussions:** Engaging experts from academia, government, civil society, and the private sector to discuss various topics related to empowering women in industrialization and processing.
- iv. **Workshops and Training Sessions:** Conducting interactive workshops and training sessions to enhance the skills and knowledge of participants.
- v. **Exhibitions:** Showcasing women-led successful enterprises, innovative products, and technologies in the industrialization and processing sectors.
- vi. **Networking and events:** Providing opportunities for participants to connect, establish partnerships, and explore mentoring possibilities, including Gala Dinners.

7. Date and Venue

7.1. The AWIP events including the Summit will be held during the Africa Industrialization Week, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 09 to 13 December 2024.

8. Contact Information

8.1. For more details on the events, kindly contact the following:

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