COMMUNIQUÉ
CREATING THE AFRICA WE WANT

Her Excellency, Ambassador Arikana Chihombori-Quao, MD

DIALOGUE WITH LEADERS

FACILITATED BY
In line with the objectives of African Women in Leadership Organisation (AWLO) on the 24th of April 2020, I hosted *Creating the Africa We Want*; H.E. Ambassador Arikana Chihombori-Quao Dialogue With Leaders. African Women in Leadership Organisation is a non-for-profit organization for advancing African Women’s Leadership globally. In furtherance of our objectives, is the facilitation of high level meetings, for consultations, and inclusive decision making; for the development of African Women, and the region.  

*Creating the Africa We Want* was a strategic meeting on the work of HE Ambassador Arikana Chihombori-Quao and her organization African Diaspora Development Institute (ADDI); to provide inclusive opportunities in the development of Africa, and leverage resources for the Her Excellency’s developmental aspirations. It’s focus was majorly on the role of the African Diaspora in such development efforts. The Communique on *Creating the Africa We Want* hereby captures deliberations, and collective input of Leaders from Private Sector and Public Sector present. It also specifically highlights the efforts of ADDI in the development of Africa and the organization’s call to action. This communique contains collective inputs of Leaders and does not represent the opinion of African Women in Leadership Organisation.

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*Elisha Attai*

Dr. Elisha Attai,  
AWLO Founder
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Creating the Africa We Want creates the opportunity for Her Excellency, Arikana Chihombori-Quao to share her vision of African Unity with Leaders, and an avenue for feedback and deliberations.

Dr. Attai, led meeting proceedings; setting ground rules, and moderation. The meeting began with Ambassador Arikana’s remarks on COVID-19, describing it as “nothing we have ever seen before”. Therefore, everyone must strengthen their immune system. She goes ahead to give an overview of Creating the Africa We Want.

Her Excellency laid the foundation by acknowledging the journey of Pan-African fathers; Emperor Haile Selassie, and the Casablanca Group in Addis Ababa, in 1963. Their belief in ‘Africa for Africans’, leading to the formation of the now African Union.

She cited the boundaries imposed by the Berlin Conference, making it very difficult for “the tiny little African economies” to trade. While making it easier to trade with the Chinese and the Europeans.

She posits that Africa needs to come together. “To realize that Togo on her own is like one Delaware, going to the world Market as Delaware”. This is the premise on which Dr. Chihombori-Quao puts forth that, Africa as a continent that wants to grow up to be like the United States, must take advantage of its unity, because USA becomes a super power as a ‘united states’.

This is a pursuit to be accomplished incrementally. In steps to this, she believes Africa requires an African Central Bank, African Stock Market, African Monetary Policy, African Single Currency and Military. While this may be aspirational at the time of this meeting, Africa can start with the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, adopted in 2018 by African Leaders, to address the issues of trading and eliminating trade blocks.

The journey of Africa she believes starts with a mindset change; as individuals, who don’t cultivate attitudes that pose a set-back to collective progress. Instead strengthen unity at all levels. Self-hate should end, so as not to be used as an instrument of self-destruction.

Africans and descendants of Africa, she concludes, still suffer the legacy of colonization. The alleged trend of mistreatment of Kenyan citizens by Chinese bosses, and the racially abusive viral content of a Kenyan employee describing Kenyans, even the president Uhuru Kenyatta as ‘monkeys’ exposes issues of colonialism.

She describes African Countries as having political independence but lacking economic independence. The majority of the big companies employing its citizens are owned by companies based or headquartered in former colonies. While the average citizen pays tax, big companies like Glencore have been sanctioned by government, on issues of tax evasion.

Furthermore, African leaders may be limited to moves, to protect its citizens because of consequences from dealings with former colonizers. It’s important to understand such dynamics, as well as the full spectrum of issues faced as Individuals, a community, and a country.

The former AU Ambassador further opines that for Africans, it starts from liberation from a colonial mentality. And embracing being just as equal as the Chinese, European, or Westerner. To be awoken and not present themselves as defeated. While skin colors may be differ, Africans must recognize that in the face of injustice, they need to be bold enough to condemn injustice, and say ‘enough is enough’ to the exploitation of Africa.
Following Dr. Chihombori-Quao’s overview, Dr. Attai opened floor for deliberations. To which attendees responded, with questions and recommendations. In reaction to the responses, the former AU Ambassador gave insight into her present work as an individual and in organizational capacity.

She created a call to action of awareness, on an individual level, and collectively, to tap into the full potential of Africa and Africans. She elaborated the role of the African Diaspora Development Institute in pooling resources for the development of Africa. The areas covered were as follows:

- Tackling underlying issues
- The Role of ADDI
- African Trade Policy
- Thought Leadership
Tackling underlying issues of colonization mentality, starts with knowledge that one may suffer this affliction. Hypothetically, a Chinese man may own a store in a black neighborhood, equally as a Blackman. Strangely, he will be faced with prejudice and become outrun by the Chinese, even though he is just as competent as the Chinese.

This is a problem of the colonization legacy, which the damage can only be undone through knowledge. Ambassador Arikana Chihombori-Quao, seeks to address this in her book - *Africa 101: The Wake-up Call*, an exposé on African history and the multidimensional impact of colonization on Africa.

Also, the idea of blanketing African issues such as ‘corruption’ can undermine African Countries’ individual progress, and is not strategic. African issues vary from country to country. Therefore, calls for specific strategies and prioritization. Africa is a work in progress, and not yet one giant country as there are 55 countries. To inaccurately paint all African Leaders with one brush would be unfair. Africans must single out issues.

Bearing in mind that a leader is as good as the people around them, Africans must continue to awaken their minds, contribute voices, and objectively tell leaders their position on issues. They must continue to dialogue with one another.
The role of ADDI

There is need to be organized; to harness the strength of African unity. Dr. Arikana Chihombori-Quao champions the African Diaspora Development Institute (ADDI); an organizational membership made up of all people of African descent living outside Africa and friends of Africa to organize the diaspora professionals and friends of Africa into continental, regional and strategic teams according to sector for African development.

This serves as a neutral body and conduit to bring together organizational efforts. It acknowledges efforts of African Diaspora organizations, and organizes advocacy at a continental level. For instance, ADDI offers the first right of refusal to opportunities to African diaspora businesses. Ultimately, its goal is to unite the African Diaspora.

It acknowledges the sea of organizations working just as hard, with existent infrastructures, and fills the gap of collaboration. It serves as a neutral platform set out to open the doors and be the conduit between the diaspora and the African Heads of State and Government.

But for the Corona Virus outbreak, ADDI had scheduled plans for the Zambia Economic Development Commission, commissioned by the President Edgar Lungu of Zambia to make a full presentation of all projects available in Zambia to the African Diaspora in the United States.

ADDI is also set to offer African youth and women low interest business loans, to spur new businesses in Africa. Its Mentorship Program facilitates partnerships between youth and women in the diaspora, and Zambia; to galvanize engagement between the African Diaspora and Africa.

Plans have been underway for the Invest-in-Zambia Road show, to set up meetings with Zambian ministers for unveiling business opportunities. 25 Businesses were to have a close-door session with the Zambian President. All in steps to introduce the Diaspora to opportunities at the right level. The reception from Zambia was to pave way for opportunities in other African countries’, with hopes that African Diaspora will play a part in building Africa.
2018 was a monumental year for African Leaders who were able to achieve African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. Some of the monumental strides were the adoption of the single African Air Transport Market, and the protocol on free movement of persons. The latter establishes the African economic community relating to free movement of persons, right of residence, and right of establishment.

In response to one of the attendees, on establishing 8 currencies representing the 8 regional economic communities, prior to the single currency. The Ambassador recalls the European Union’s challenge with the Euro, and African Leaders’ proactiveness to prevent such occurrences.

Even though it has adopted the Eco, strengthening of regional customs union preempts the implementation of a single currency. And the ten convergence criteria, set out by the West African Monetary Institute (WAMI).

Africa, at this time, must focus on removing non-tariff barriers, harmonization of policies, and elimination of boundaries. Dr. Chihombori-Quao submits that “Everyone is in agreement that, what is needed is a single African currency, but the time is not now”.

She explains that, COVID-19 also places certain limitations on the implementation of African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement,
In response to the First Lady of Sierra Leone; H.E. Fatima Maada Bio, on the role of leaders as flag bearers of African Unity Dr Chihombori-Quao commended her contributions especially in speaking truth to power. Calling on other thought leaders, and African first ladies, to spearhead engagement in steps to African Unity.

She urged that more women take center stage. Emphatically speaking on the role of women in the African agenda.

“Being an African, all you need is the color of your skin, you don't need anything else to identify as black”. She reechoed the words of Her Excellency, Fatima Bio.
H.E. Mrs. Fatima Maada Bio believes Africa is still colonized mentally. She condemns xenophobia and other prejudices among Africans. She calls on African leaders and citizens to call out such behaviors. She believes in an Africa for Africans, where one’s skin color is enough identification, and calls on Africa to begin to seek a common agenda.

She spoke of her great admiration for the work of Her Excellency in giving a voice to Africans. She refers to her as an embodiment of truth. She addressed issues relating to women’s leadership such as the lack of support among women termed as the ‘pull her down’ syndrome. She said this does not provide an enabling environment for women’s growth. “We have to believe in one another; we have to believe that we have the capacity and capabilities”. She also said, “We cannot only be cheerleaders we also have to be part of the decision-making”. Even though women suffer major limitations of tradition, culture, religion, she is confident that, “If women stop giving up so quickly, and we support one another, we will grow”.

Concluding she says she looks forward to hosting HE and other African Women in Leadership at the African Women in Leadership Conference Sierra Leone. “I look forward to celebrating you along with other African women in leadership, because women must be celebrated, to encourage another woman to grow, and know you are not alone in this”. She encourages African Women in Leadership Organisation not to give up its plans for the African Women in Leadership Conference to be held in Sierra Leone. To engage in meaningful conversations and dialogue on creating change.

H.E. Mrs. Fatima Maada Bio
First Lady of Sierra Leone
CREATING THE AFRICA WE WANT

Michael Anani agrees with the longstanding issues of colonization and African Unity. He reflected on a meeting held with African diaspora organizations and the Ambassador during her tenure as the AU Ambassador to USA. As a stakeholder, he wanted to be assured of the efficacy of ADDI in representing the African Diaspora.

Michael Kojo Anani, Founder & President African Diaspora Council

Dr. Favor Ayodele spoke about his radical belief in the sufficiency of Africa. He condemned Africa’s overdependency on other continents, but rather focusing its development. To prevent loss of resources, especially human capital.

Dr. Favor Ayodele, Dean AWLO HeforShe Global Community

Irene Chinje raised a question on the nature of activities to engage individuals, as a member of AWLO working with a lot of women. She observed the inefficacy of AGENDA 2063 for Africa, and AGENDA 2024 to track the 10-year development. She called for deepening wok in her region; the Central African Region.

Irene Chinje, Member of AWLO Cameroun Chapter
Zaynah experiences a disconnect working with Africans in Africa, versus Africans in the Diaspora. As a Kenyan she faces a hard time identifying as African because of her white skin, and driving home the message of individual, as well as collective responsibility, to build the Continent.

She raises a question about the consciousness of leadership – as Africa fortifies its own value system, and community, to take responsibility and lead change.

Alejandro Evuna Mba described his dilemma as a young African Leader whose voice is not taken into consideration in decision-making. He believes electoral leaders are recycled, stemming from fear of losing power or becoming irrelevant. He urges that young Africans are represented in the pursuit of building Africa.

As a young business person in Africa, his experience is also that there is inequitable funding with preference given to external citizens. He seeks redress, and the consolidation of African Diaspora efforts through one Diaspora group representing the interest of all African regions. He is also seeking female Leadership involvement in Africa.

**Alejandro Evuna Mba**
Deputy Head of Mission to Egypt from Equatorial Guinea

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Zaynah Khanbhai
Adetunji Omotala is a Nigerian who lived in London for 10 years. He raised a question on how Africans in Diaspora can work very closely with young Africans in the diaspora; to take up spaces in governance, and turnaround the great fortunes of Africa.

Motunrayo Animashaun agreed with the imperative for the African Diaspora to come together in an organized manner. She looks forward to a family forum; to brainstorm, and exchange ideas to move Africa forward. This she hopes will be achieved through a framework that unites the African diaspora. As a stakeholder, she wanted to be assured of the efficacy of ADDI in representing the African Diaspora.
Almira observes that there are ongoing efforts by multiple organizations to pull the diaspora together towards making a difference in Africa. At the same time, she believes it is not sufficient for making impact on a grandiose level considering there are 55 Countries.

She begged understanding, that there is strength in numbers, and the need for a conduit to channel all parties’ efforts, and focus resources. Despite ongoing efforts for years, there hasn’t been much achieved. There is need to come together rather than disunite, and prevent a demise all together.

She believes Dr. Arikana at the helm of these efforts will yield substantial outcomes, based on her demonstrated passion and fearlessness. In the little pond that you have there is only going to be so much that you can do. We are all in this together.

Keorapetse Kalaote believes that Africa is still being colonized. Quoting South African anti-apartheid activist, Steve Biko, "the most potent weapon is the mind in the hands of the oppressor. He raised a question on the potency of the current leadership, who are being placed by what he refers to as ‘Superpowers’. Whether there’s a chance that they were being tapered or not. And how it contributes to achieving the goal of the Pan-African fathers.

Following the proposed Eco, he also wanted to know if the pursuit of a single currency could be preceded by establishing 8 currencies representing the 8 regional economic communities. And if it will determine slow or accelerated growth of Africa.
Cilr Yemi Adenuga, described Ambassador Arikana as passionate, and urged the African Diaspora to come together as one body, standing behind a Leader who speaks the heart of Africa. She also described her as an embodiment of the much-needed change in African leadership narrative, being a woman in leadership.

She insisted on Africa’s receptiveness towards change, saying “How can we make the home ready to embrace change?” She believes a ready Africa is one who is not waiting on hand-outs or hand-downs, but painstakingly willing to pursue the change it so desires until it materializes. “I believe that Africa can be better, but we have to see the value in what we hold as a continent because the entire world wants to be in Africa”.

Cilr Yemi who contested in the Irish local government elections in the previous year was elected to become the first black female councilor in the republic of Ireland. She considers this an honor, and believes she inspired confidence in voters through her hard work and involvement in the community. She believes in the empowerment of people, and building people. This she says played a big role in getting elected as a public representative of the Irish people. “If we can do it outside, we can do it at home. Imagine if women came together and picked one woman and said and we are all going to be solidly behind that one woman, and come rain come shine, we will win. I tell you women will lead Africa”. This she believes can be achieved if women could stop the ‘pull her down’ syndrome.

Cilr Yemi Adenuga
Councilor Meath County, Ireland
Acknowledgements

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