



SOCIETY OF WOMEN IN TAXATION

A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE MAIDEN INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL WOMEN CONFERENCE HELD FROM FEBRUARY 16-19, 2022 AT AZALAI HOTELS, DE LA PLAGES, XWLACODJI, COTONOU BENIN REPUBLIC

Preamble:

The Society of Women in Taxation (SWIT) being the female arm of the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria, setting the pace on engaging Professional Women in national development, organized a maiden International Professional Women Conference with the theme: **THE ROLES OF PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN NATION BUILDING**, at Azalai Hotels, De la Plage Xwlacodji, Cotonou, Benin, from February 18-19, 2022. Delegates were drawn from different professions including Tax Practitioners, Accountants, Auditors, Bankers, Lawyers, Journalists, Security Personnel, among others.

Attendance:

The conference was convened by Dr. Abiola Adimula, FCTI, the National Chairperson of Society of Women in Taxation and Planning Chaired by Dr. Titilayo Fowokan, FCTI, CITN Council Member.

The conference was attended by Mrs. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development goals ably represented by the UN Women Country Director in Nigeria, Ms. Comfort Lamptey; H. E. Lt. Gen. Tukur Y. Buratai, the Nigeria Ambassador to Republic of Benin ably represented by Mr. Bukar Kalambe, Head of Chancery, Nigeria Embassy in Benin Republic; Dr. Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed, the Hon. Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning; Mr. Adesina Adedayo, mni, FCTI, the President and Chairman of Council, Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria (CITN); Barr. Samuel Agbeluyi, FCTI, Vice President CITN; Dame Olajumoke Simplice, FCTI, Immediate Past President of CITN, Mr. Saliou Dieye, President of West African Union of Tax Institutes (WAUTI), ably represented, Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, Chairman Nigerians in Diaspora Commission; Erelu Olusola Obada, former Deputy Governor of Osun State and Former Minister of Defence; Ms. Zouerra Youssoufou, CEO Aliko Dangote Foundation; Mrs. Adetola Aibangbee, FCTI, Board Member of Federal Inland Revenue Service; Ms. Ayotola Jagun, Chief Compliance Officer and Company Secretary, Oando PLC; Dr. Justina Okoror, FCTI, CITN Council Member and SWIT Pioneer Chairperson, Princess Elemaya Ebilah, National Chairperson of Professional Women Accountants of Nigeria (PROWAN); Mr. Arnaud Akakpo,

Président de la Chambre de Commerce et de l'Industrie du Bénin, other CITN Council Members, Past Chairpersons of SWIT and several other women from different professional bodies.

Presentations:

The Conference was enriched by paper presentations in six different sessions. The lead Paper on **"The Roles of Women in Nation Building"** was presented by Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, Chairman Nigerians in Diaspora Commission while Mr. Adedayo Adesina - CITN President, Dr. Khadijat Yahaya – Lecturer, University of Ilorin and Mrs. Lilian Okonkwo-Ogabu - Deputy National President, National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) were Discussants. Barr. Ezinwa Okoroafor, former National Chairperson of SWIT chaired the session.

The second session on **"Dynamics of Financial Management"** was moderated by Mrs. Toluwalogo Odutayo - Associate Director Deloitte and Touche, while Mrs. Comfort Olu Eyitayo, mni - President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria- represented by Dr. Ijeoma Anaso, Mrs Bunmi Akinde - Lead Consultant, Kayta Services limited and Dr. Ola Brown - the CEO of Flying Doctors Nigeria, were the Panelists.

Dr. Titilayo Fowokan - Group Head, Strategic Tax and Compliance, Dangote Industries Limited, gave a Seminar on **"Dynamics of Transformational Leadership for Women in Business"**. Mrs. Frances Okoroafor, Federal Inland Revenue Service and Mrs. Ngozi Jipreze, FCT Internal Revenue Service were Discussants.

The extensive and exciting session on **"The Woman and Her Health"** was directed by Lady Purity Nwokeafor, Head Nursing Department, R-Jolad Plus Multi-Specialist Hospital, Lagos. The session gave expository in-depth discussion on challenges and treatment of fibroid, blood pressure, menopause, family planning and stress management.

The main Paper on **"Women in Leadership Position: Challenges and Prospects"** was presented by Erelu Olusola Obada - the former Nigeria's Minister of Defence, with four other erudite personalities as Discussants, viz: Dame Olajumoke Simplice, Ms. Ayotola Jagun, Mr. Bolaji Osunsanya, CEO, Axxela Group, and Mrs. Adetola Aibangbee. The session was chaired by Dr. Abiola Adimula.

Ms. Zouerra Youssoufou, Princess Elemaya Ebilah and Dr. Justina Okoror, made insightful exposition on the topic **"Stirring the Entrepreneur in you"** at their session, which was moderated by Mrs. Bosede Ikhanoba, 1st Vice National Chairperson, SWIT. The session revealed the various opportunities available for womenpreneurs who are involved in small and medium businesses in Nigeria.

Highlights of Papers Presented

1. The obvious gender inequality, and the consistent advocacy for fair representation of women in leadership positions in public and private sectors were acknowledged.
2. The Nigerian woman has a surviving spirit and should strive to do more to become relevant in the scheme of things.

3. Women face challenges of discrimination fueled by culture, religion and tradition and are uninformed of the Laws in place to address those issues.
4. Bias such as old stereotype, fewer connections and lack of flexibility have prevented women from taking up apex roles.
5. Requisite education and family support is key to women advancement.
6. When you train a girl child, you train a nation was re-emphasised, and professionalism should always speak for women.
7. Alternative investment and risk taking is the soul of enlarged business.
8. Personal upskilling, cash management and budgeting, enhances family and business management.
9. Technology, Digitalization and Globalization are the bedrocks of investments.
10. Sustainability of women's businesses and contribution to economic growth will thrive in an enabling and conducive business environment.
11. Leadership is not about control but influence. Women have what it takes to make positive influence when performing their leadership roles.
12. Good leadership qualities are embedded in character and integrity. They include self-awareness, personal development, effective cross-cultural communication, strategic thinking, innovation and action.
13. Transformational leadership entail ability to be people-oriented, team player and multi-tasking towards national development.
14. Nurturing the growth of upcoming generations of women is a major assignment for professional women today.
15. Health is wealth - only healthy women can showcase the entrenched attributes of professionalism.
16. Stirring a desire in women to balance power in leadership and decision making.
17. The "pull her down" syndrome can kill the "can do" spirit in a woman.
18. Fear, timidity, lack of exposure and collaboration affect women advancement negatively.
19. Historically, women in Africa had been in power as traditional Queens, Chiefs and community leaders. Colonialism took away the authority.

Recommendations

1. Policies and practices that encourage gender parity should be supported to change the narratives of women in leadership.
2. Women should be deliberate in practicing excellence. It is in women's DNA to do well.
3. Improved sensitization and awareness programmes on the rights of women will empower women and reduce discrimination.
4. Women generally and particularly Professional Women should get involved in politics and attain leadership positions at different levels, to make their impact felt and to overcome bias.
5. Families should support women and girls in the pursuit of education and leadership opportunities.
6. Successful Women should encourage other women by creating room for other women to advance.
7. Women are to go beyond other people's visions and have big dreams for themselves.
8. Women should seek alternative investment and should strive to take calculated risks.
9. Women should embrace technology in safeguarding their investments and also take advantage of the opportunities available with digitalization and globalization of businesses.
10. Government should create an enabling environment for women to thrive and put in place a Trust Fund to combat vulnerability of women and address their peculiar needs.
11. Women should be role models to other women.
12. Women were encouraged to develop good leadership qualities.
13. Professional women should make contributions to national development in their respective spaces towards building a nation of their dream.
14. Professional Women in leadership should nurture the growth of upcoming generations of women.
15. Women should take good care of themselves and maintain good hygiene and regular medical check up to remain healthy and be in a stable state of mind.
16. Only qualified, competent and deserving women should be propelled and given a chance in Leadership and Government. Women should understand their strength and make it work for their country.

17. Women are to speak up and stand up for what they believe in, exposing themselves to mentorship and mentoring others, striving for excellence and celebrate themselves. They should showcase their individual achievements and collaborate with others.
18. Women should deconstruct the old stereotypes and regain authority in aspiring to and attaining leadership positions.

Other Side Attractions

The Conference featured an African cultural night where delegates were gorgeously robed in different African attires and showcased rich African heritage in appearances and dancing steps.

Also, an excursion to the Songhai Farm in Port-Novo, Benin, exposed delegates' mind to operating an organic farming for family sustenance and for commerce.



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