

## Press Release

April 21, 2021  
Accra, Ghana

### **ACCESS BANK HOSTS PAN-AFRICAN WOMEN CONFERENCE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SCALEUP AFRICA**



*Elsie Addo Awadzi and Olumide Olatunji*

As part of activities marking the sixth anniversary of the Access Bank flagship ‘W’ Initiative, the Bank has hosted leading women across Africa in a virtual Pan-African Women Conference to highlight the importance of creating an enabling environment that helps women to thrive.

Riding on this year’s International Women’s Day theme, **“Choose to Challenge”**, the virtual conference had over 1,500 participants joining from various countries on the continent.

The conference was organised in partnership with ScaleUp Africa, a Pan-African enterprise development agency that is focused on innovative strategies to help women owned SMEs go global.

Addressing participants in her keynote at the conference, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana, Elsie Addo Awadzi mentioned the advocacy to empower women has been long and seen tremendous progress with many women occupying leadership roles but there are challenges that need to be surmounted to ensure more women achieve their full potential. “It is the collective duty of all to ensure women progress in all sectors because the impact ensures growth... Data from International Finance Corporation (IFC) in a Goldman Sachs report, estimates that as many as 70% of women-owned SMEs in the formal sector in developing countries are unserved or underserved by financial institutions – a financing gap of around \$285 billion and if this gap is closed the economic benefits are enormous.”

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She also encouraged women to invest in themselves, know who they are and their worth to better position them for the opportunities being made available through women empower and gender equality interventions.

During his interaction with participants, the Managing Director of Access Bank Ghana, Olumide Olatunji brought to fore the impact women have on society when they are supported to thrive. He argued that, “A wholesome society requires that everyone is able to wield their power and contribute to build a sustainable economy that supports human enterprise...When women rise and grow, the society is better off for it, because the resilience and commitment given ensures there is enough to benefit all.”

Olumide also added, “As a bank, our commitment to women advancement sits at the centre of our sustainability and financial inclusion strategies. We recognize the critical role women play, particularly in the economy and this informs our products and services as well as initiatives that we pursue, including the ‘W’ Initiative”.

The CEO of ScaleUp Africa, Amma Gyampo in her remarks indicated that her organisation is on a mission to nurture closer ties between African businesses for positive, long term economic legacy and as such the partnership with Access Bank to organise the conference will help women owned businesses to tap into opportunities available.

Other speakers of the conference include: Yofi Grant – CEO of GIPC, Matilda Asante-Asiedu - Group Head of Retail Banking at Access Bank Ghana, Fatima Alimohamed – CEO of Africa Brand Warrior (Ghana), Franklin Owusu-Karikari – Director of Support at NEIP, Irene Ochem – CEO of Africa Women Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum (Nigeria), Chilufya Mutale – CEO of Premier Credit (Zambia), Justina Mutale – Country Director of African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (Zambia) and Thelma Ekiyor – Managing Partner SME.NG with Kokui Selormey Hanson – Co-Host of Citi Breakfast Show, moderating discussions of the conference.

The ‘W’ Initiative seeks to inspire, connect and empower women by offering a bundle of tailor made products, services and opportunities to women, ranging from young professionals, women with family and women in business.

Through the initiative, the Bank has won several awards including the Global Financial Inclusion Award from the Banker of the Financial Times and the Most Innovative Retail Banking Brand from the Global Brands Awards for its Live B3ta product under ‘W’.

Currently, Access Bank is ranked as one of the biggest retail Banks in Ghana by assets and it operates a large branch network across Ghana. The Bank continues to commit resources to improve the wellbeing of key areas such as education, health and social improvement across several communities in Ghana. It is also committed to sustainable

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business practices that drives profitable, sustainable growth and is also environmentally responsible and socially relevant.

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