

SPEECH DELIVERED BY MRS AISHA BUHARI,
WIFE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA AT THE COMMAND
PERFORMANCE OF "LITTLE DROPS" A STAGE PLAY IN COMMEMORATION OF
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, 2016

MARCH 6TH, 2016
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE, ABUJA

TO AN EXTRAORDINARY LEAGUE OF STRONG WOMEN

Protocols!

It gives me pleasure to welcome you to this special event in commemoration of the International Women's Day, especially marked by the Niger Delta Development Commission, which now has the rare privilege of being led by a wonderful daughter of the Niger Delta.

I have watched, with admiration, her determination to reposition and re-professionalize NDDC to meet the expectations, of an organization that discharges its Mandate and obligations efficiently and effectively, in the new spirit of Government. I am happy to see a woman of such high commitment, energy and great sense of duty and responsibility. She is a good example of how women can help transform, not just an organization, the Niger Delta or Nigeria, but the world at large.

Yet, in an age and time when women all over the world are making impressive contributions to social, economic, cultural and political achievements, the pace for global gender parity continues to slow down. According to the World Economic Forum in 2014, it is predicted that it would take until 2095 to achieve global gender parity.

But this can change and the power to make it happen lies in our hands.

In this special month when womanhood is celebrated and esteemed the world over, Jewels of the Niger Delta could not be a more apt theme to capture the essence. The special Queen Kambasa Awards for Excellence which the NDDC is championing, which will recognize and reward women achievers from the Niger Delta, is a commendable initiative. It is important that we begin to create role models by honouring greatness, and the awards finds a worthy totem in the first female queen from the Niger Delta, Kambasa.

The Girls in Engineering, Mathematics and Sciences (GEMS) is another initiative that deserves commendation. It is important to encourage our girls to embrace science and technology, so that more and more women can occupy important positions in the society, especially in the oil and gas business that finds its base in the Niger Delta. Products of this scheme will, indeed, add to the national human capacity

potential and is in tune with the vision of Mr. President to raise competency and professional levels across the country.

Today, therefore, I welcome everyone who has, in different little ways, advanced the cause of womanhood, through such programmes, as well as through policy, advocacy and, importantly, art.

Art, as you all know, plays a huge role in our lives and Little Drops is only a metaphor that everyone's little contribution can make a huge difference in the world; that there is strength in numbers. And if only we can harness all our positive thoughts, the breakthroughs we can collectively achieve would be unimaginable.

Today, I welcome all the great storytellers here to present powerful stories about women. I urge you, through your imagination, through your influence, through your decisions, to create a world where the weak and vulnerable, as well as the strong and gifted, will have room to excel.

Today, I urge you to make a pledge for parity:

To take a concrete step to help achieve gender parity more quickly, whether to help women and girls achieve their ambitions, to create gender-balanced leadership, respect and value difference, and to develop more inclusive and flexible cultures that will root out workplace bias.

To make a pledge to hire more women where few existed before.

And to make a pledge to be a champion of gender parity within your organization and in the wider world.

As I close, I leave you with the words of Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Secretary General: "Investing in women is not only the right thing to do. It is the smart thing to do. I am deeply convinced that, in women, the world has at its disposal, the most significant and yet largely untapped potential for development and peace." Nothing could be truer.

I wish you a splendid evening and a most enjoyable time.

Thank you.