

NATIONAL CHAPTER LAUNCH REMARKS

**FEMWISE-ETHIOPIA
NOVEMBER 2023**

**LADY JUSTICE RTD EFFIE OWUOR
CO-CHAIR
FEMWISE AFRICA
AND
MEMBER PANEL OF THE WISE**

Your Excellency, Mr. BINALF ANDUALEM, the Minister of Peace of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. Distinguished guests, representatives, partners, supporters, colleagues, friends. I stand on all protocols.

I am deeply honoured to be here today with you all.

My name as you have been told is Lady Justice Effie Owuor. I am the co-chair of FemWise-Africa. I am also a member of the African Union's Panel of the Wise.

I have greetings for you from my co-chair, Her Excellency Phumzile Mlambo Ngucka of South Africa. I also have warm messages of congratulations from all the other members of the Panel of the Wise including our current chair Professor Kante of Senegal.

I have greetings from your sisters in FemWise all over Africa and from colleagues in the women, peace, and security movement across the world.

Today is a very proud day for FemWise-Africa.

We are here to witness the birth of our newest baby: FemWise-Ethiopia National Chapter.

It is a huge moment in our history and a moment worth celebrating because Ethiopia is only the third country in Africa to launch a national chapter after Uganda and Malawi which both launched just a few weeks ago.

I must be honest: this pregnancy has been a long one. There were times we were worried whether we would even have a delivery.

But here we are! The baby has been born after nearly two years of preparation and planning.

As a mother of six children, I know very well that we are not meant to have favourite children but I am not embarrassed to give you three reasons why I personally am so very proud of FemWise-Ethiopia.

FIRSTLY, I am very proud of all the work that has gone into getting FemWise-Ethiopia to this stage. FemWise members in Ethiopia have shown great dedication to getting their chapter to the finishing line.

FemWise-Ethiopia members successfully identified and secured a host institution in THE MINISTRY OF PEACE. A solid foundation has been built for all FemWise-Ethiopia activities going forward.

Again, please allow me to put on my continental cap. It is not a secret that some of our national chapters have found it difficult to anchor themselves within the relevant government institutions. Their journey to launch has been quite slow because of this.

In Ethiopia however FemWise has received exceptional support from the Ministry of Peace.

I am certain that over time, the relationship between Femwise-Ethiopia and its home ministry will deepen and become even more productive.

I really have to extend very special thanks to His Excellency MINISTER ANDUALEM, to State Minister Dendea and to the entire team at the Ministry for their commitment to FemWise Ethiopia. We are also thankful for your assurances of continued support.

The Ministry has shown great confidence our network but I would urge you to go further!

Female mediators can be counted on to deliver durable and lasting solutions to conflict EVEN in the most difficult and complex of situations – they can and should be central to all peace building efforts!

SECONDLY, I am very proud of what FemWise-Ethiopia intends to do. We had a roundtable session here yesterday and I spent the afternoon listening to some intense discussions. The MOTHERS OF PEACE had a lot to say! I was impressed by the ambition displayed by our members. It was clear to me that this is a national chapter which intends to run, not walk.

FemWise members are ready and willing to apply themselves fully to the work of mediation and peace building in Ethiopia. They have strategies and plans and are now looking towards implementation.

FemWise-Ethiopia has also shown great maturity in outlining the challenges it faces as it takes up its

mandate.

We cannot deny that mediation can be expensive work and the resources need to be found to enable Femwise-Ethiopia to achieve its full potential.

What has impressed me, however, is that FemWise members are eager to roll out activities even as the modalities surrounding funding are being ironed out.

I applaud the sense of urgency that I have seen in FemWise here in Ethiopia. Members realise that peace work is important and that time cannot be wasted when it comes to questions of women and security.

This brings me to my **THIRD** and final point.

Congratulations FemWise-Ethiopia on the timing of your launch. You are launching exactly when you need to be launching.

As I look across Africa, and at the threats and challenges to peace and security in our continent, the situation is complex. I am sure that we can all agree on this; things are very difficult indeed.

We at FemWise-Africa desperately need FemWise-Ethiopia to help women take up their rightful place in mediation and dialogue. We need your voices. We need your technical expertise. We need your energy. We need your insights.

We are also counting on you to shepherd other FemWise chapters in Africa. We are relying on you to be a good big sister to your little sisters who have not registered as much success as you have.

It is a lot to ask of you as a newborn baby but we are fully confident that you are up to the task!
Once again: congratulations. We are very proud.

I thank you!