

## **Speech Thembisile Nkadimeng**

**Mayor of Polokwane, UCLG Copresident**

**2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Africa-Europe support Committee for the Charter**

**28 July 2020, 14:00-16:00**

**Dear President, dear mayors and colleagues.**

Thank you all for being here, gathered around a critical topic for the entire world, and perhaps more especially now during this pandemic which has affected women disproportionately.

Equality, and more specifically gender equality, needs to be put at the heart of all development processes in order to guarantee that decision-making is done conscientiously, without forgetting half of the world's population when it comes to taking decisions that affect all of us.

Our equality-driven movement has always unequivocally championed gender equality. Coming out of Africities in 2018 we adopted the "Africa-Europe Marrakesh Pact for Local Equality", and during our World Congress in Durban we agreed to set in motion concrete actions to make the voice of women and girls heard in the localization process.

The project to create a Charter is incredibly pertinent to us not only because, as local leaders, it will allow us to reinforce our actions towards gender equality but also because it is essential to stand by our word and our commitment to ensure that the needs and aspirations of African women, whose immense struggle for equality over the years is part of the reason why people like me can stand here today, are met.

We are already seeing the effects that this pandemic is having: women are more likely to lose their jobs in female-dominated

spheres such as hospitality and tourism sectors; it is likely that women will stay in places of care post COVID-19; and it is critical, thus, to ensure that we safeguard the progress we've made towards gender equality, including hard won gains for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The status of women, the specific needs and unique contributions they make to shape the future of humanity cannot remain invisible. It remains essential, in the post-COVID era, to include women and their voices in both the formulation and monitoring of public policies, and especially those that belong to populations that have been historically discriminated against.

As identified in our UCLG Decalogue for the Post-COVID era, we know well that the sacrifices that we are asking from this and future generations need to lead to more just and equality driven societies where we take care of each other and where all have the same rights and opportunities.

The already precarious livelihoods of women around the world are now worsening. Gender violence is increasing, often exacerbated by the precarious housing conditions. And yet; women are the bulk of the of the health, care, basic stores workers that are at the frontline of facing the challenges, and represent almost 60% of the workforce on a part-time basis while being under 40% of the total employment. They are also playing a critical role in the cohesion of our neighbourhoods and solidarity efforts, keeping us together and safe.

Women are at the forefront of care work, and it is critical to acknowledge this by developing an **equality framework in urban planning, in legislation and development. Time has come to ensure full inclusion, full participation of women and girls in politics and in the social fabric of cities and regions.**

Dear friends, dear colleagues, I am convinced that the Local Authorities Charter for Gender Equality in Africa is now more necessary than ever if we are to adopt **a pathway towards a Generation Equality where women leadership is no longer an exception but the new normal.**