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GUEST NAME: DR PELONOMI VENSON-MOITOI

SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
DR. MALKA (INTRODUCTION)	Hello, I'm Dr. Amaleya Goneos-Malka, welcome to 'Womanity – Women in unity'. The show that celebrates prominent and ordinary African women's milestone achievements in their struggles for liberation, self-emancipation, human rights, democracy, racism, socio-economic class division and gender based violence.
DR. MALKA (GUEST SYNOPSIS)	Joining us today with the 25th African Union Summit in Sandton is Minister Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi. Minister Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi is currently the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Botswana, she was previously Communications, Science and Technology Minister; Works, Transport and Communications Minister; Trade, Industry, Wildlife and Tourism Minister; Education, Skills and Development Minister and is currently Minister of Foreign Affairs.
DR. MALKA	Minister could you please share a few of the landmarks in your career and when you understood that serving your country was a big part of your destiny?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**Well, let me just start off by indicating that it has been a long, very long road and on the political side it started off – it has not always been on the political side. I started off being a public officer working as an administration officer in what we call the Land Boards in Botswana and these are the land administration authorities. I ended up in the Ministry of Local Government which was called Ministry of Local Government Land and Housing as permanent secretary – which is equivalent of Director General in the South African government - that is the equivalent. I spent almost 20 years on that side of government work, before I joined politics. In politics – this is the beginning of my fourth term which is my sixteenth year in politics, fourteen as Minister. The first two years in politics I was on the back bench which is ordinary member of parliament because in Botswana you have to be both member of parliament before you become a minister, because our ministers are appointed from parliament. The most, I think important parts of my service to my country have occurred in both for me when I served Local Government and the contact that I made with people particularly in the rural areas their everyday life, particularly in the Land Board, the closeness to the rural people, the closeness to land – how closely people relate to land. Not only for agriculture, but for basic survival; for housing, for growing your food, for grazing your livestock, for raising your children, for everything – everything that people do, is on land. Therefore land acquisition, ownership of land or access to using land does become central to everybody in the country. Learning to use land and to administer land and to deal with people's issues around land, for me that was the greatest exposure and the greatest of knowledge in my country. Also just learning just about people and dependants on land. Then I did a few bits and pieces and then I went to school as an adult. I didn't have my degree until I was much older, because I had to look after my younger brothers and sisters as it happens with most of us who grew up and had to go school to support families to support siblings. I am the eldest of eight.**
DR. MALKA	That's a big family, minister.
Dr. Pelonomi	**My father passed on when I was young and I had to help my mother look after**

Venson-Moitoi	**the younger ones. Therefore when I finished my high school, even though I had the opportunity and had scholarships at the time that I could've taken up to go to university, I couldn't. I had to work to help my mother to raise the younger ones. Therefore I had to let school go by and then do my university much later when I was 35 and when I was 37 I graduated with my Master's Degree. For me that was just something that had to be done because I realized then that if you didn't have a piece of paper, it didn't matter how smart you thought you were. The world out there, wanted a piece of paper to prove it. That's why I had to struggle very, very hard to go out there and do that piece of paper. It wasn't easy, I tell you because trying to do algebra and calculus at 37 with young kids who know these things and I had to sit in front of a computer at that age – it was the scariest part of my life. But I had to do it.**
DR. MALKA	But I think minister with what you're saying in terms from an education point of view, it gives you the skills, it gives you the ability to take on and learn new things. We'll be right back, after this.
AD BREAK	
DR. MALKA	Today, we're talking to Dr Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for Botswana. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter @womanitytalk. Minister in your capacity now your portfolio is Foreign Affairs and all of the community work that you've done, you working across different countries I am sure that that has given you the advantage in your portfolio today. Whilst you hold this position it puts you directly in conflict where culture, tradition and religion are concerned and requires you to find the silver lining I think sometimes for the benefit of women moving forwards. What is your opinion on this?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**I think the thing that fine-tuned me even further ironically was the Ministry of Education, this is my last posting. I went into the Ministry of Education, without – I am not trained in education, I am trained as an administrator. When I did my Master's degree, I chose Human Resources development even though my background – the diplomas I had done were all in Local Government because that was where my forte was. But then I decided look, I have administration all my life and then too it was mostly in Local Government but let me pick Human Resources Development and let me pick it from a scientific point of view and in that process take Systems Development and take it because of the IT era, take Management Systems from a point of view of modern technologies and that's what I did at 37. And that was the most exciting of all things. So I had to do international finance, I had to do statistics at that age, the challenge was huge, I struggled, I studied and for the first time in my life and in my academic life I saw an A on my results. I was always a B student and quite happy with that, but I started seeing A's because I had to do to work double time, because I couldn't imagine myself failing, I knew I had to pass. But I didn't realize that I was putting in so much effort, that in fact it propelled me even beyond my own dreams that I had. But education, to answer you directly – education put me in every family because every family has a child that goes to school, you see the passion of mothers, single mothers – it threw me back to my own mother struggling with so many children going to school without a father. It put me through poor families seeing children through school, it put me through abused children trying to go through school, secrets of families of children that are abused at night who then have to wake up in the morning and trying to struggle with learning in school, of teachers who have to show compassion to uncover societal problems of children who are having difficulties studying, of brilliant children who may come out with A's through the year and suddenly drop to D for no reason that teachers could understand but some teacher with compassion has to sit there and understand why. And this is what**

	I was finding out with education – that there's yet a whole new world in education more than just teaching, that was happening there.
DR. MALKA	And recently I have had conversations with Bathabile Dlamini who is South Africa's Social Development Minister. One of the key areas that she spoke about is the importance of early childhood development, almost placing it paramount before we get to the education levels.
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**Those were the things that I had to fight with. When I got into the ministry of education in Botswana, I found that primary education was in one ministry, from Standard Eight equivalent of South Africa which is Form 1 in Botswana was in another ministry. My immediate reaction was we couldn't expect Junior Certificate and Matric which is Form 5 results to improve for as long as these two were separate. We didn't have pre-school as compulsory; it was left to the hands of NGO's and private operators. I have fought and I can say today that I forced the introduction of pre-schooling in all public schools. It is not yet running the way it ought to be running, but I have said every single primary school should have pre-school. Even if it means running a six week induction program, do that. We don't have buildings for it nor do we have equipment for it. But at least have those children go through an induction because it is critical that children have preliminaries before they have grade 1. We have a pilot now that has introduced at least in 150 of the schools in Botswana; now have a twelve month proper pre-school program. Because without pre-school, you are not preparing the students sufficiently to get ready for school. It is going to happen now in Botswana. If primary education isn't done, if primary school teachers are unhappy, results will never improve. So my hope is that the education system in Botswana should turn around in the next 5-6 years.**
DR. MALKA	And Minister is that also part of the millennium development goals in terms of Botswana's objectives, how is it progressing?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**Well we have a new and vibrant minister in Botswana, a former judge and she is coming in with so much energy, she is younger and my hope and I really am very impressed with the way she is taking on the program. It looks like she's going to push this thing even harder and my prayers on a daily basis are that she's going to get this thing right. It is looking promising, because with the primary teachers on the upswing as it looks, we can only hope for better results in Botswana.**
DR. MALKA	Education is fundamental I know that UNESCO has done numerous reports where they talk about additional years of schooling, the benefit particularly for women to not only enrich her own life, but what she does for her family on their wellbeing and in turn their education. Minister, turning towards another aspect of the summit, you are here in your capacity as Foreign Affairs has the conference fulfilled your expectations so far?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**The conference from the point of view of on the gender side, my satisfaction comes from the fact that after hearing the presentations from other countries, I am happy that Africa seems to be making progress. In fact compared to the rest of the world, I have great hope that African women are going to come out a lot better in terms of fighting for their rights in many ways I think more than other parts of the world. This is my hope; this is how it looks from where we sit at least after the meeting yesterday, because African women are very vocal. African women if you look at African markets as just an example, the African woman - you go to the markets anywhere on the continent, they run the economy there's no question about that. The African woman in poverty stricken villages - she's running the household, they keep the family together. There's no question about that. So wherever there is life, even in the poorest of**

	families any ticking of life at all if there's any, is because there is a woman there. This says to me that the hope that there is on the continent, is in the hands of those women and all we need to do is to provide hope, to provide resources as government, to provide legislation that gives them strength and gives them protection. And also then provide those resources and make them accessible so that the women that keep homes running and fires burning can at least have access – and I'm not saying handouts I'm just saying that when people try, we should make it possible for them to get to the next level.
DR. MALKA	So we need more enabling elements whether that's through policy to help with the implementation?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**We really have to make it possible for those that work hard to get to the next level that they deserve to get to.**
DR. MALKA	Minister, talking about women working within the continent and the space – in South Africa women constitute approximately 44% of the South African workforce, but 80% of our female labour force occupies low-skilled underpaying positions. How does this compare in Botswana for example?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**In Botswana there is an interesting contrast. Whilst South Africa may show higher numbers in the political arena, Botswana isn't doing so well in the politics. For instance, there are only five ministers in cabinet, but if you go to the level of ambassadors – half the number of ambassadors in Botswana (50%) are women - more than half of our director generals are women. The directors below those are mostly women; the judges are women – I mean half of them are women, the Governor of the Bank is a woman, the Attorney General is a woman, the Auditor General is a woman, the Director of Corruption and Economic Crime is a woman. All the key - those are the positions that I have mentioned, those are women. So on the admin, all the administrative positions the women are coming up.**
DR. MALKA	And it sounds like women are then straight throughout the hierarchy and given your proof and your evidence of your career; you started within that capacity and migrated to the political space.
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**We have not taken a quota in Botswana, deliberately.**
DR. MALKA	Please can you elaborate on that, because I know that from a South African point of view we have tried to take through on a quota.
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**We haven't because we thought you know if we say 30%, the minute we hit 30% we are going to be told that's enough that's your quota. That's how we can get to 50% and nobody's stopping us, that way we can even get to 60% and nobody will know that's where we are. We will probably get to 70% and they will think maybe that's too many, but by that time it will be too late. But we don't have a quota in Botswana and this is why we are not even talking about a quota.**
DR. MALKA	So for instance in South Africa and I know in Malawi there are gender equality bills and the South African bill is still waiting to go through its various renditions. Do you have any similar types of policies in place?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**We have not ratified the gender protocol precisely because it was asking for the quota, it was also asking for certain guarantees that we knew we couldn't keep up to. Also certain guarantees that we thought would tie women to particular positions that may not necessarily be rewarding for women and this is why we thought for as long as women are not stopped from getting into positions where they qualify and of course we look bad because we haven't ratified.**

DR. MALKA	But it sounds like based on what you saying from a Botswana point of view that it is a very progressive government and that it's pro-women.
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**From, from – if you look at it on the ground, we are not complaining but from those that are looking at Botswana from having not signed, we look like the bad neighbours who are not signing the protocol because we haven't – but you see whether we sign it or not, we look bad because we are not doing what everybody is doing. But the thing is, it doesn't really help us or we don't really lose anything by not signing. So we could sign it just to keep up so that is the reason why we haven't signed, purely because – and this is how we operate really. We usually look at what the protocol does locally, whether it changes the value of life for our citizens, whether it violates any rights effectively and whether by not signing it we are cutting anybody down in ja, violating any of our own laws. And if we are not and quite frankly if we are signing it only to keep up with the Jones', frankly sometimes we don't do things because we want to be in fashion.**
DR. MALKA	Well there's a tremendous amount of legislation and I think the most important thing with any legislation is implementation but if there is an abundance of legislation which is not going to do anything, then there's no point.
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**And if we are going to sign it and then fail to honour an obligation which is like once you have signed you have to send ten people to some country every year to show face and it doesn't do anything at home, we don't sign things for that kind of reason because then the effect of signing is only cosmetic. So those are some of the reasons.**
DR. MALKA	We will take a short break.
AD BREAK	
DR. MALKA	Today, we're talking to Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for Botswana. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter @womanitytalk. Minister turning towards a more personal perspective, you hold one of the highest positions in your country and you have had an illustrious career going through with 16 years within the government space. You in the process have become a role model providing evidence to many women and girls not only in Botswana but also across the continent with your different workings, that hard work and personal sacrifice is one of the key elements and through that anything can be achieved. Can you share with us some of the gender challenges that you have experienced and overcome during your career?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**I will tell you what, I turn a blind eye sometimes to challenges that are gender-based because were I to see them as clearly as sometimes as they sometimes manifest. I would spend far too much time, there are too engaging sometimes and I know they would waste a lot of my time. I have seen them and every time I have seen them, being human you end up – you can't help but sometimes get the emotional side getting engaged. And that is one thing in my professional in my work life that I have trained to stay at home, the emotion. That is far as I am concerned I have told myself you know, emotion stay at home because that is for my children and for my family. I have told my emotion you don't come to work with me you stay at home, I try very hard.**
DR. MALKA	It's a challenging thing to do though.
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**It is, it is – it's big, it's very difficult, it's very strong. But if you don't do that you could get destroyed because you can imagine the level of disappointment you get at work, the level of betrayals you get at work. It is not that you don't get competition at work, there is competition from your mates, from – boys don't play nicely they don't. Boys don't like being outwitted by a girl, no they**

	hate it and they play rough and when they hit back, they don't care whether you are a girl or not. So you need to learn – luckily for me when I grew up, I grew up around boys. So I know how to play boy-games too, so I know when to be a tomboy, I know when to be – I know when to play boy-games. But you know it puts a strain on you to be guarded all the time - to have your antennae up all the time because when you are a female, occasionally the antennae does come down because you – the mommy factor comes in and you want to mother everybody and that's when they hit you. They know.
DR. MALKA	So they look for the soft spots?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**They do, they do. And I have been hit a couple of times and I tried to run for party chairman once and boy they hit me, bad. And when they do that, they will use women as well. And that's usually the most painful thing to be deceived by other women. And then you have to realize that you can't exactly get angry at other women for being used by men. So these are very challenging moments, they are and you need to learn and to accept that these things do happen. The one thing that I think us women have to learn also is that, men will try anything. They will even try sex if it comes to a push and if we don't learn that early enough in life or they will take you throughout your life if you don't wisen to that early enough in your life that this is one of their tools that they try to use. Luckily because I grew up with boys they told me, I mean if they like you and you grow up around them, they teach you their tricks so the ones I grew up with they let me know that hey, look, this is one of our… So I knew all along from an early age that this is sometimes fun, sometimes it's a trick, sometimes it's a ploy, sometimes we do care. So I knew from a very early age, it's not always "I love you", sometimes it's practically you are being screwed.**
DR. MALKA	I am using you.
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**Yes.**
DR. MALKA	Minister, taking into account your experiences, what would you advise young women who want to follow a political career?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**I would say – this is difficult. I didn't get into politics until I was much older and this is what I tell my children. I wouldn't advise them to get into politics when they are young. I would say get your life first, get your job first, find out who you are first. Basically get your life first, find out who you are, get your life get your money first. And I don't mean that I am rich, I am not a rich person I am just a content person, I am happy with my end of the month pay.**
DR. MALKA	Would you say it's about being financially independent?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**Yes get financial – be financially independent, be comfortable with the little life that you have, or the big life that you have whatever life you have, be comfortable with that first. Be comfortable with who you are and the life you have, then you can go out there and claim to represent others. Also realise that you are giving up a big part of yourself to realize that you are fighting for a bigger cause. It's not about what you want; it's about life out there that affects so many other lives. Sometimes it's seeing the bigger picture, not just the smaller picture about your own choices. It's about being able to give and take and being able to realize that sometimes you could be wrong and be willing to listen; listening is a big part of it. You have to be able to listen. And sometimes listening to people you don't like, because sometimes the wisdom, the answer you seek comes from that single person that you hate totally. But you have to listen to all of them because sometimes the answer will come from the one source, you didn't expect.**

DR. MALKA	I think you have given us a great insight into public life and what it takes as an individual. Minister, one of the questions that I ask all my guests on this program who like yourself have made tremendous achievements in their respective fields, is what they consider to be some of the key factors in their success. Some people talk about hard work, others talk about perseverance, some talk about the influence of their mothers. What would you say have been the most pivotal factors that have helped you achieve your success?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**I would say all three for me. I persevered because my mother was there, I bet you maybe if she wasn't there, I wouldn't have stuck it out I would probably have just told them to take their job and stick it. Hard work I just enjoy working and I enjoy a challenge at work. I enjoy seeing things happen and I like to take a situation and turn it around, for me it's a thing that I like doing. But my mother was an amazing person, she didn't have much education. She only did standard 3 and stopped school because she had an eye problem and during those days, young children didn't get taken to an eye doctor because they couldn't – they were not supposed to wear glasses and … but when I had problems at work and I struggled and I was fighting with my bosses, she always told me that they don't own the offices, the offices are public offices. They too will be gone one day you should go back there and go to work and she was a big one at prayer and she taught me how to pray, she taught me how to forgive, she taught me how to believe in the bigger power and how my life isn't to be decided by other people and how my life is going to be decided by me and my own strength and my ability to persevere. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't have done it.**
DR. MALKA	Well I think moms give an incredible push and as we hear with the conference today, we really demonstrate the importance of women. We will be right back after this.
AD BREAK	
DR. MALKA	Today we are talking to Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for Botswana. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter @womanitytalk. Minister increasingly we live in a globally connected society and given your role of Minister of Foreign Affairs, can you expand on some of the more significant collaborations, projects that you are undertaking and working on in the continent?
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**I have only been in the office eight months and I must say one of the first ones has been for me Peace in SADC, peace in the region because when I came in there was elections all around and therefore I was caught up in peace missions for Mozambique and Lesotho, immediately. That for me was important and of course peace keeping missions in the Great Lakes region which is still ongoing and to some extent South Sudan because it is a country that where we had collaborations with the Minister of Education where I was before. We also had some work far afield but that was more Ebola in Liberia. So peace keeping, the importance there for us is that if we have peace in the region, it transcends all the borders of course, because any disturbance in any of our neighbours affects all of us because it rolls over into all the other countries. This is why it's important that when one country has any disturbance of any kind, we mobilize and make sure that we collaborate. Then apart from that is the general development of the region. The Xenophobia issue didn't escape all of us, it was an eye-popper for all of us and we were all concerned and we are all concerned that all our countries not only in the region, but the whole continent it is important that African states' economies stabilize, peace returns in most of the countries, education improves and countries begin to – we fight poverty so that our citizens can find employment at home. And it's not just in the Southern**

	Region, the boats that are crossing into Europe on a daily basis; this is an African problem that bothers us, all of us. It is an African nightmare that so many African children cross the Gibraltar literally on a daily basis and so many lives are lost in the Mediterranean for reasons we can no longer explain – and that should bother all of us and solutions do have to be found. Whilst we are fighting with all of that, there are the terrorists. Boko Haram is no longer a joke. So I come into the Ministry at a time when problems are no longer just helping each other out with floods or drought, it's a situation where the issues are broader, but no country can sit back and say "It's not my problem", it is our problem throughout the continent and I can say that we are sharing information and help is sought throughout – whether it's ideas or resources, help is sought and is being received wherever it can be delivered.
DR. MALKA	Thank you Minister and Minister, we are now going into the last part of our conversation today to close the discussion. Can you please use this platform to send a message of hope to all those women in Africa that due to circumstances, gender equality might not be the first item that is on her agenda, but rather the daily struggle of taking care of her family, raising her children and putting food on the table is a more pressurising reality.
Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi	**I would say that women, that woman should not give up. I am a daughter of a woman who had no education. A woman who had nothing at all. And all she did was, she wanted to raise her children and send them to school and she struggled. And she started to brew home-made ginger beer. And we would come back from school and carry these bottles to the village mall and sell these bottles of ginger beer, every day. Through the sale of this ginger beer, this woman raised her eight children, I am the eldest. Today all of us are working; the last born my youngest brother is in Ban Ki Moon's office as an IT consultant, a graduate of IT. All my siblings are qualified people, self-employed from the sales of that home-made ginger beer. So those women should not give up, it doesn't take witchcraft or rocket science to make a minister or to create an assistant for Ban Ki Moon, determination, trust in God and hope.**
DR. MALKA	Minister thank you for those words, they are so inspiring and we really appreciate you joining us here today. You have been listening to Womanity - Women in Unity and we have been speaking to Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for Botswana. Tune in to the show next week as we continue our series of discussions from the 25th African Union Summit when we talk to Professor Nkandu Lou Minister of Gender and Child Development for Zambia.
END OF PROGRAM	