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**GUEST NAME: AMBASSADOR ELISABETH BARBIER**

<b>SPEAKER</b>	<b>TRANSCRIPTION</b>
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 in studio today is the Ambassador of France to South Africa, Elisabeth Barbier. Ambassador Barbier has been a diplomat for almost forty years. She is no stranger to the African continent, having previously been Ambassador of France to Kenya and is the second female French Ambassador to South Africa and she has served previously in South Africa twice, first as First Secretary in Pretoria in 1982 through to 1986 and then as Consul-General in Johannesburg from 1994 through to 1998. Welcome to the show, Ambassador.
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Thank you very much, Dr Amaleya and thank you for having me in your show today.</b>
DR. MALKA	We're so glad that you could join us and going straight into the conversation, you have served your country for almost forty years at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and through that you've held various positions. Can you share with us a few of the landmarks in your career?
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Well, maybe I'll start with entering the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which was of course, for me the first landmark and not particularly easy at the time because it was in '76, at the time when women were very few in the Foreign Service. So ja, that was the first landmark, let's say, we can come back to that later and then I think my first assignment which was to Jerusalem at the time, I mean it still is a complicated situation but at the time it was before President Sadat's visit, first visit to Israel, well it was you know for me, of course very you know important, first experience for Foreign Service. And then you know each country has been different and I would say that then the next big step is of course when after having gone up the staircase, you arrive and you are given your first post as Head of Posts so for me the first time was as Consul-General to Johannesburg and that was just after the '94 elections, which was of course, a very special time.</b>
DR. MALKA	And now twenty-one years later, you're the Ambassador to the country. You must have seen tremendous changes from when you first came in to where we are today?
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Ja, of course because the first time I came to South Africa was during the apartheid and more specifically, during state of emergency. At some point we, France withdrew its Ambassador to South Africa, because of the beginning of sanctions and then I was left as Chargè d'affaires, you know, being at the Head of the Embassy at the time and ja, I've seen tremendous change of course. When I left South Africa the first time in '86, I was sure</b>

	<p>the country was going to blow up, I mean it was difficult not to be pessimistic about the future of the country and so it was a great joy to come back to South Africa in '94, just after the elections. Ja, and to see all the changes and now is another stage, of course in the life of the country and it's also very interesting.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And I think that's fascinating, the life cycle changes that we go through from a political point of view, social structures and within the developments in the country but also from a globalisation point of view.</p>
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<p><b>Absolutely. The world is changing around.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And constantly so, and in terms of your tenure now, being the Ambassador of France to South Africa, are there any particular milestones that you want to achieve during this period?</p>
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<p><b>Well, clearly I think for an Ambassador of France anywhere in the world, economic diplomacy has taken you know a kind of priority so there is quite a strong French economic presence in South Africa, so my job is to promote it and to make sure that things are going smoothly, the relations are expanding, that is one big part of my job but also, France is quite famous for its soft diplomacy approach, which means culture, relationship with the universities, promotion of the French language and Francophonie because that links all of as to Francophone Africa. So you know it's a very diverse kind of activities. Ja, that's what takes up most of my time, I must say.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And during your experience as an Ambassador and being a female Ambassador in Africa, from a gender point of view must often touch on very sensitive issues, whether it's from a culture, religion or tradition. In your experience, do you think women Ambassadors face different challenges to their male counterparts or are they judged differently? And I raise that because one of the things that you triggered in the first part of the conversation was that you joined the Foreign Affairs in the seventies. And at the time that was almost the second wave of feminism.</p>
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<p><b>Yes, that's right. Well the challenge, it depends you know if you are a junior diplomat and when you become Ambassador because your job and your responsibilities and your authority, let's say, of course are different, but I never found that being a woman was a handicap or was a problem, in any of the countries where I've served. In Morocco, which is a traditional society, but where women are accepted in public life, so it has never really been a real problem. On the contrary, I would say that it is an asset, it really makes you access spheres where you know your male colleagues can't necessarily, have access to. I think it's more a plus than a minus, let's say.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And do you think that the French philosophy, having the softer diplomatic approach and building on more of the cultural issues, like you said looking at things like heritage and education with universities, do you think that that dynamic lends itself more to a sort of female intuition and leadership component?</p>
<b>AMBASSADOR</b>	<p><b>Well, I don't know, I mean, I think you know I've got male colleagues who are very, extremely good at cultural relationship, but you know forging</b></p>

<p><b>BARBIER</b></p>	<p>links with universities so I don't think the female factor is very prominent there, but more when you try and reach to civil society when you work with the NGOs when you are involved in development aid. I suppose the fact that you are a woman gives you a different way of looking at things and sort of would push you to select this project rather than that project because you see more of a gender angle to it, that would probably be the difference.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>And can you share with us some of the cultural differences and challenges that you've encountered whilst serving France in different countries in Africa.</p>
<p><b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b></p>	<p>Well, I've been quite lucky, because I've served you know for instance in Kenya, the situation of women can be difficult, but at the same time at the political level it is ... I mean promotion of women is put as a priority, the reality can be different. There are many many challenges, if you go to rural areas, patriarchy is still very much there and I suppose in South Africa it's the same as well, I mean there are always different situations, a kind of dichotomy and between reality and the law, the Constitution, but I didn't face any particular challenge in that sense and I always remind myself that in France, you know the rights that women have acquired actually came quite recently from a historic perspective, for instance, women got the right to vote only in 1945. My mother when she was born she didn't have the right to vote and she got it after the war after the second World War in 1945 and then progressively women acquired new rights, which are now considered as a given but at the time it provoked, it caused great great battles in France, so it's a progressive kind of a struggle.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>And although you say that, I was quite surprised in reading from a historical point of view, that French women from about the 17th century have almost I'd say earned respect from women around the world in terms of their contributions to women's liberation movement and today gender equality is increasingly a global focus and we're looking at it from a point of view of emphasizing and growing females' leadership capacity. How do you see building female leadership, whether it's in government space, whether it's in the education space or the business world?</p>
<p><b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b></p>	<p>I think education is of course the first stop where really women, girls you know, children have to be encouraged and promoted, there is this challenge for girls not daring to go into scientific matters, we have in a different way or maybe it's less of a problem but it is still a problem in France of girls going naturally to some studies and hesitating or under-evaluating themselves and not trying for bigger achievements in scientific fields and so on. So I think that's the first thing to really encourage girls to dream big and not to limit themselves to what is traditionally a woman's job like being, I don't know, in healthcare or basic education or secretarial work, really to go for you know jobs which require more qualification, so to go for it, I think that's really very important.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>I totally agree with you. I think that often it's a case of having the right role models in place because when we can see somebody else that we can relate to that person and identify with her that makes the possibility seem so much more real to the individual.</p>

<p><b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b></p>	<p>No, you are right and I see how it happens in South Africa and I think it's very encouraging because I've met many women who are you know, who have made big achievements at university level and who spend part of their time mentoring younger girls and you know giving back to their community with a focus on women and I think that's very important, ja.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>And briefly, Ambassador you mentioned in terms of your mom only receiving her voting rights in 1945 which if we think about it, is such a short time ago and how much we have progressed as a ... I suppose as the world, in terms of honouring women's rights. So taking into consideration the challenges and successes that women's legal rights have taken over the last few years and all of the progress that we've got, what areas do you think still needs attention?</p>
<p><b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b></p>	<p>Well if we talk about France, I mean the struggle is going on, clearly. Nothing comes naturally, in terms of achieving real equality between women and men. You have to force it a little bit, otherwise you know things have a natural tendency to remain the same. I mean status quo is very comfortable so in France there has been of course a big debate about positive discrimination, you know, everybody is equal so why should some people be suddenly more equal than others. The debate has been going on and it ended into a law, in the business sphere, you know, imposing a quota for women in boardrooms let's say, because in business world if women are not present in the boardroom they are nowhere. So there was a percentage which was given as a goal, so very precise targets in terms of percentages of women in boardrooms and with timelines and that would be to reach 40% of women in 2017 I think, in boardrooms.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>And will that go across all companies in France?</p>
<p><b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b></p>	<p>Well, it should but actually what was the first target, where the big companies which are in the French Stock Exchange, you know, CAC quarante, the main ones but then I think if it starts there it's easier to have it also you know, trickling down in other companies.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>I think legislation is incredibly important and that's one of the elements that the Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill in South Africa is supposed to institute and their targets is to get a fifty-fifty parity but with all of those elements there obviously has to become the implementation aspect and there has to be some type of consequences to organisations that don't comply, so punitive effects now coming into play.</p>
<p><b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b></p>	<p>In the public sector also there have been eventually a law to impose in the public service, so to the different ministries, a certain percentage of women in the, you know top management jobs let's say, and that is also with very precise targets, timelines and financial sanctions, if targets are not reached. And I must say, I'm quite proud of it, that the Minister of Foreign Affairs in France is actually leading the way, it's progressing quite well. We are presently, if you take the example, the most visible example which is the number of Ambassadors, there are at the moment 48 French Ambassadors all over the world out of, well 190 I think, ambassadorial posts so we are not there yet but we started from I don't know, from about 23 a few years ago, a couple years ago so there's been big progress but it still has to, one should never consider ... that's it, we've achieved. It's a constant battle, you know.</p>

DR. MALKA	You're right, when complacency sets in, I think that's when we tend to regress and not progress.
<b>AD BREAK</b>	
DR. MALKA	In the first segment of our conversation, Ambassador Barbier took us through some of her history in terms of the various posts that she's held, including Jerusalem, Morocco, Kenya and South Africa and highlighted some of the changes in legislation that have taken place, in terms of women's rights, for instance women having the right to vote in France only came through in 1945 and the recent changes in legislation to promote greater equity within the corporate space and with having more women present in the boardroom looking at quota interventions of aiming to achieve 40% by 2017. Ambassador, picking up from the last element of our discussion, in terms of women going into the boardroom and the working world, I consider that the working world was designed by what I phrase as typically men's hours, where in effect we're almost losing as a population group, half of the best multitaskers from the work force due to some of the traditional expectations that women still have to fulfil by having to reform their working timetables to accommodate all of the family commitments that they still have to bear the burden of achieving as well as trying to build a successful career. What's your perspective of this and do you think that in the 21st century it's about time that something is done in terms of being able to restructure to accommodate women's multiple roles?
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Yes, it is clearly, you're right, it's a big question, you know how can you lead together your family life, taking kids to school, taking them out of school and then being on time at the big meeting where you are making a presentation and, that's still a big problem. So a different ... I think in the corporate world there is the feeling and the realisation that if they are losing women, that's a problem for their business because it has been proved that women in business do increase the results of any company. So they are making efforts, I think to, in terms of working hours and the facilities, of working from home for instance, but it's still quite difficult to juggle all these responsibilities. It's the same in public service, if I take the example of the Minister of Foreign Affairs there is, you know, big thinking given to this issue under the leadership of a kind of group, it's not a trade union but it's a group of women diplomats who have been, you know, trying to see how to attract more women into the Foreign Service and you know, trying to see how the working hours can be re-arranged, the facilities which can be given in terms of working from home or mobility, you know, devices, this kind of things. It is in progress, but it's still difficult.</b>
DR. MALKA	And within an institution, like the Foreign Affairs, are there any other support dynamics that come through, for instance with childcare facilities or elements like that, because I often find that from a woman's point of view, she tries to manage everything in her life, and obviously her children are one of the most important factors but knowing where they are, knowing that they are a few feet away, I think helps with the proximity and the mind-set.
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>That has been a big debate in the Ministry but there is no real, you know childcare facility in the Ministry, but it's, you know you have to know that in Paris, childcare facilities are very very few, too few for the needs, and that is a problem, you know, even for people who are not working in</b>

	<p>public service, so I admire a lot, I remember once visiting Australia and seeing that there they have, you know childcare facilities for civil servants and life is made much easier but no, that's something that we still have to fight for. You know the facilities which are given is to help you to find a place for your kids in a crèche or when you come back from a posting abroad, to help you to register your kids in a school.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Just to integrate in but you still need the extra bodies to help her.</p>
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<p><b>Absolutely. It's still, it's quite hectic, I must say.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And Ambassador, one of the questions that I ask all my guests who come on the programme is, in terms of the factors or the elements that have led to their successes, so some talk about, in the way that they grew up, or having a parent who influenced them, others speak about hard work, one person spoke to me about fear which motivated her and took her forwards. What in your opinion have been the key drivers to your success?</p>
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<p><b>Well I come from a, let's say middle class background where you know all the kids went to school and of course we were supposed to then go on to university. So my parents were quite supportive but at the same time the choices I made were not at all influenced by my family because when I entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I had never seen a diplomat in my life. Those were the days when you were not doing internship in different places you know, to try and taste the kind of work that you wanted to do. So I had no idea what diplomacy was about. All I wanted was you know, to travel, to be free to earn my own money and to travel. My mother was, she had you know, studied but when she got married and got the first kids she stopped working. So for me that was the counter example, I didn't want to stay at home, I wanted to see the world and work so hard work is definitely something which drove me at that time. Ja.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And what would you say had the biggest impact on you to make you become the person that you are today?</p>
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<p><b>Phew, that's a difficult one. I don't know, I've met you know very very impressive people. I can't say that I really have a role model, because you know in my job I was you know, one of the first women in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so and you know I didn't get any mentoring or anything. So my, you know, I can't say that I admired or was supported by any person in particular, but I met so many you know, diverse, important persons which made an influence on me or like, I don't know, for instance where I was in Kenya ... you remember Wangari Maathai, this environment activist. So I was at the time when she got the Nobel Prize for Peace and I also had a few opportunities to interact with her and for me that's you know, that's really an icon but there are other icons in ...</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>She was a force to be reckoned with and I recall a quote, which I'm probably going to get wrong, but she said, "The reasons cited from her husband for divorcing her was, too powerful, too educated." So everything that a woman aspires to be, he couldn't handle it.</p>
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<p><b>No, no that's right, and I'm particularly thinking of her now because you know, there is a lot of talk about climate change and we are on our way, I don't know how many days, until the Paris conference, COP 21, which will</b></p>

	really be a big event. And you know, she underlined the role that women have to play, in you know fighting climate change. She had a big reforestation project.
DR. MALKA	And at grass roots.
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Ja, that's exactly it. That change has to come from grass root. That women have to be involved because they are in the end the first victims of climate change. So that will be one of the you know, priorities as well of France Presidency, you know being the President, the Chair of next COP ... of the COP 21 I think women will have to play a centre, central role also in this subject.</b>
DR. MALKA	And on that note, can you tell us about some of the development programmes and aid that France promotes for women, specifically in Africa?
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Ja, France is one of the key donors, I think in Africa as far as development aid is concerned and I think for now about ten years, gender issues have been prioritized in our development policy, because you know one realises that if you don't involve women in rural projects for instance, you go nowhere, so you have to, you know, even have from the conception, have women involved in the projects that you want to carry out with the local authorities. So we've adopted the gender and development strategy and it is applied at different levels in the different programmes that we have on the ground in those countries. In South Africa we have a very small programme because South Africa is not a recipient of aid but we also focus the support we give to civil society, to issues of governance, but in particular, women issues, women rights, you know via those NGOs who are dealing with Violence against Women, LGBTI issues, the impact of AIDS on specific young women and girls. So those are some of the things that we are doing and it's clearly one of our priorities.</b>
DR. MALKA	Those are very core issues in terms of the gender battles and challenges that need to move forwards.
<b>AD BREAK</b>	
DR. MALKA	In our previous segment Ambassador Barbier spoke briefly in terms of some of the flexibility that has been incorporated or trying to be incorporated into the work force to help women become more empowered and able to fulfil a better balance in terms of their home life as well as their professional capacity and she also highlighted some of the work and the various programmes and areas that the French government is involved with from a donor perspective within Africa. Ambassador, I'd like to talk a little bit about education now. Education is a vital tool to empower individuals as well as societies and even basic levels of literacy and numeracy have shown to have profound effects on terms of the wellbeing of women. Benefits such as greater control over fertility rates, reduced child mortality, improved health management and poverty reduction. According to UNESCO, a study that they did, they indicated that an additional year of schooling yields a 10% increase in earnings. In your opinion, are we as a society doing enough to ensure that this type of knowledge is being preached in every forum possible and passed on from mothers to daughters, especially in underprivileged communities, which is not just an issue from an African point of view but also a European point of view and other parts of the world.

<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Ja, no I think a lot is being made clearly in terms of public discourse on the importance of education and particularly for women, for girls. Then very often it's the implementation of course, which is lacking or more difficult. But there is also the degree of motivation of parents for the education of their kids. If I take the example of Kenya, it's quite incredible, you know the amount of importance that education has for the parents and along the roads of Kenya, you see all kinds of small schools, all over and kids walking in their uniforms, from you know, along the roads all over and you have a feeling that, you know, really investment in education is a priority for parents, even if they don't have much money.</b>
DR. MALKA	What I find interesting is from a tertiary education point of view, that there is a far higher percentage of woman graduates than male graduates. So I think that and this is my personal opinion, that women are using whatever tools they've got to empower themselves and understanding that knowledge is power and when you come into the game or into the work force, that by having that educational qualification, that whether it's an undergraduate or a postgraduate, that's what's going to provide an edge on a competition.
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Ja, but the question is how to get to university? And that is still a problem but, no, no you're right, I've met so many brilliant women in university, in scientific fields and where you don't expect women, even in Europe and they are very prominent and determined, ja, well very interesting.</b>
DR. MALKA	And it all factors into the whole knowledge economy which as a global movement is where we're finding ourselves, is developing knowledge because we've outsourced so much to technology that almost though this physical elements are done for us but now we need to have that thinking capital to come up with the next cycle.
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>I had the opportunity to visit the SKA project and to have a presentation by a young South African female engineer and it was incredible, I mean she was so ... about it.</b>
DR. MALKA	Can you tell us a bit it?
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Well, she was presenting you know to, we were invited as a group of Ambassadors by Minister Naledi Pandor to you know, visit the SKA and we got the presentation by this young woman who was, you know, she was talking about her antenna, everything she had a sense of, she was in the middle of things and this SKA project you know is incredible because it really puts South Africa into the next, you know, the next world what is going to happen with big data, and it's very interesting and women are definitely taking their part in it.</b>
DR. MALKA	And that's the, SKA's representing the Square Kilometre Array.
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>That's correct, ja and radio, telescopes ...</b>
DR. MALKA	No, it's a fantastic project, that just again, opens everything up from not just at a regional level but global level and the contributions that we're making to our world body of science.
<b>AMBASSADOR</b>	<b>Ja, it's very exciting.</b>

<b>BARBIER</b>	
DR. MALKA	Now, Ambassador we're coming to the end of our show today. You hold one of the highest official titles of being the Ambassador of France to South Africa and in effect, as we've spoken a little bit today, you are a role model, providing evidence to many women and young ladies, whether it is in South Africa, whether it's in Kenya, whether it's Morocco, France or any other area of the world for that matter, that with hard work and perseverance everything can be achieved. Can you please, in closing the discussion share with us a few words of wisdom or hope that you'd like to pass on to women in Africa that are listening to the show?
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Well, I'm not very good at, you know, words of wisdom but I think, you know the main thing is that you have to dream big and to go for it and you will always find on your way, people who will be ready to, you know, to help you to the next step and also you have to listen to people because that also helps, you know to forge your own personality and to give your ideas about what you can become. That's what I would say, as wisdom words.</b>
DR. MALKA	I think those are important learnings from your experience that people will welcome to take on board. So thank you very much for joining us today. It's been a pleasure to have you and we look forward to hearing about some of the future developments that France has in place, not just from a South African point of view but also with some of the projects that you're addressing with the rest of the continent.
<b>AMBASSADOR BARBIER</b>	<b>Thank you very much, it was a pleasure being in your show. Thank you.</b>
<b>END PROGRAM</b>	